THE STING OF DEATH

A 2ND EDITION M&M SUPERLINK ADVENTURE

M&M SUPERLINK

by C. Richard Davies

plain brown wrapper games

THE STING OF DEATH

By C. Richard Davies

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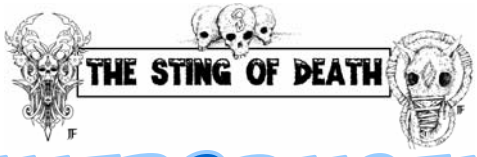


INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Sting of Death, a midlevel supernatural M&M Superlink adventure. This is a supernatural adventure, with a strong element of horror, but it doesn't contain anything too gross or bloody for a four-color campaign. The adventure may involve creepy cults and a spooky castle in Transylvania, but it's relatively straightforward and light in tone, without a lot of tortured moral ambiguity or dark and disturbing plot-twists. The setting conjures an atmosphere of dread (at least if we've done our jobs right), but the story itself is a simple tale of overcoming evil and banishing darkness. While it is distinctly arcane in flavor, and might particularly appeal to PC magicians and occult investigators, there is no reason why a group of traditional superheroes couldn't run through this adventure just as well. They won't even need to have a sorcerer on the team.

What You Will Need to Use This Book: The Sting of Death is not a stand-alone game. It is instead an adventure scenario for M&M. It does not make use of any supplemental materials or campaign books. You will not need anything but a copy of the core rules (second edition) to make use of this adventure, apart from some twenty-sided dice and some players. Perhaps some snacks might also prove to be a wise investment.

Integrating This Adventure Into Your Campaign: We've written The Sting of Death so that you can play it either as a stand-alone one-shot adventure, or as part of an ongoing campaign. We want it to fit as smoothly into your game world as possible, so while there is a back-story, we've tried to keep it from getting in the way of any "official history" your campaign might have. We had to make a few basic assumptions. Magic exists. It has been an active force in the world for centuries. People with superhuman powers existed as early as World War Two and played a part in that war. The Nazis pursued strange and evil experiments in weird, unnatural sciences. These are about the only assumptions you need to make, and fortunately, these are common assumptions that most comic book worlds share. Although we have set part of the adventure in Transylvania, we do not address the question of whether vampires exist. If they do, then they don't appear in this adventure (so that our ideas about what they are like won't conflict with yours) The PCs are going into the Carpathians to fight an entirely different kind of supernatural evil. We have also included a couple of Romanian superheroes you can use at certain points in the plot, to help or hinder the PCs, but because we don't want their origins to conflict with the history of superheroes in your game world (who knows, maybe in your campaign Romania doesn't even have traditional cape-wearing superheroes), we've kept them strictly optional. We also have a fairly powerful arch-villain, but we've designed him so that he won't have to become the central focus of your campaign, distracting the PCs attention from your own world-threatening menaces.

New Feats and Powers: We have not included any new feats, skills, powers, drawbacks or other new game mechanics in this scenario. This too is part of our philosophy of making this adventure fit your campaign-world as smoothly as possible, with a minimal amount of extra work on your part.

Adventure PL: This adventure is intended for a group of three to five PL 10 Superheroes, but it can be adjusted for heroes of any PL. At the end of each scene, we have included notes on how to adjust the level of challenge to fit your PCs, making the scene more or less difficult. Heroes with mystical powers or knowledge will have advantages in the early sections of the adventure, but will be in greater danger in the final encounter.

BACKGROUND

More than a millennium ago, during the Dark Age that followed the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, many mystical beings rose to power across Europe. While certain of these powers became potent forces for good, many more had far less benevolent intentions. Fortunately, these evil beings spent much of their strength in wars with one another and with the benign powers.

One of the darkest forces of evil in this grim era was the foul sorcerer who called himself Death's Sting. His true name and his origins were long forgotten by the late sixth century C.E., when he terrorized the inhabitants of the Western Carpathian mountains. Death's Sting was not a vampire as such creatures are generally understood, but he had worked dark magic that transformed him into a creature neither living nor dead.

Eventually, several of his rivals made common cause to bring about his defeat, and seize the treasure trove of magical artifacts and arcane lore he had collected in his fortress. As they began their assault, Death's Sting realized that their combined strength would eventually overpower him. Rather than fight or flee, the creature hatched a plot that would let him steal victory from the jaws of defeat, and dance on the dust of his enemies' bones. He cast a complicated spell that resulted in both his own destruction and that of all his accumulated treasure. Thwarted in their aims, his enemies fell to battling one another, and the survivors limped away empty-handed. They could not have known that his final spell would eventually result in his return to existence, for it was not meant to happen for centuries to come. Death's Sting would be forgotten by most, and only remembered in a handful of cautionary Romanian fairy tales. But a few seers and mystics learned the secret of his final spell in the long years that followed.

Some of these formed cults that worshipped the monstrous sorcerer as a god, while others sought to warn future generations of the threat that would one day be visited upon them. For it became clear to these visionaries that Death's Sting had sacrificed much of his power in casting the final spell, and that at the time of his return he would be weaker than he had ever been. If he was attacked in this moment of vulnerability, he could be forever destroyed. Furthermore, some speculated that the treasure that had been destroyed–artifacts and lore thought forever lost–would also return when Death's Sting did.

Unfortunately, not everyone who learned of this flaw in the monster's plan was driven by noble motives. One of the worst of these was Heinrich Himmler, the commander of Nazi Germany's dreaded Schutzstaffel, or SS. In 1942, as the Second World War began to turn against the Nazis, Himmler hatched a plan to seize Death's Sting's treasure and turn its might against the enemies of the Third Reich.

Though the time of the return was then decades in the future, Nazi occult scientists had developed a primitive form of time travel (or possibly stole it from some other source) and used it to send a Special Unit of chemically enhanced super-soldiers to that very date. They had orders to

destroy Death's Sting, seize his possessions, and then return to the past. The unit's commander activated the time travel device ... and he and all his men vanished, never to return to 1942. It was impossible to tell what had happened to them. Himmler had the scientists involved with the debacle shot, and destroyed all records of the affair to conceal his failure. Eventually, the Nazis lost the war, and Himmler committed suicide.

In the modern era, there are still at least two cults that worship Death's Sting, one in America and one in Europe. The leaders of both groups know that the return will occur very soon, but not exactly when. The date has only been calculated once, by the author of a book of prophecies known as the *Liber Malerudorum* (or Book of Bad Learning ... approximately.) The only known copy of this tome has recently come into the possession of an independently wealthy student of the occult, who has no idea of its significance. But the leader of the American cult knows about the book's existence, and seeks to claim it for his own.

The heroes are drawn into this complex intersection of dark plots when they become involved in what seems to be a simple robbery. But as someone once said, "That's how it always begins. Very small."

To help you get oriented before you start reading the adventure, here is a summary of the plot.

Chapter One: Things Start Small

Ken Cantrick, the leader of the Reformed Church of Death's Sting, wants to get his hands on a book called the Lieber Malodourum, which will tell him when and where his dread master will return to the Earth. An academic named Barry Robinson owns a copy, which he keeps in his safety deposit box. Ken and his cultists attack the bank where Barry keeps the book, and try to break into his safety deposit box.

Our Heroes are drawn into this terrible matter when a hostage situation ensues at the bank. The cultists fail to get the book, and the safecracker they have hired to open the vault will tell the authorities everything he knows about the cult and its goals, putting the PCs on Ken Cantrick's trail. They can then proceed to Chapter Two or go straight to the confrontation with the cult in Chapter Three.

Chapter Two: The Taking

Barry Robinson now knows that the Lieber Malodourum is important and brings it home to study. Ken Cantrick and his cult will try to kidnap one of Barry's daughters to compel him to give them the book. Whether or not the PCs can protect her will have an important effect on the rest of the adventure.

Chapter Three: Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch

Whether or not the cult kidnaps Barry's daughter, the PCs will inevitably confront them in their lair. This chapter contains location descriptions and guidelines for a number of different ways to run the battle, depending on the approach the PCs take. It also includes stats and background material for a number of individual cultists, and for a couple of demons you can use to balance the scenario if the PCs are too tough for it.

Ken Cantrick himself may or may not escape the final confrontation. It won't have an impact on the rest of the adventure

Chapter Four: The Road to Transylvania

Barry Robinson contacts the PCs in a panic. He's been studying the book. Death's Sting will return in just two days. He'll be weak at first, maybe even weak enough for a team of superheroes to defeat. The book says he'll reappear in the ruins of his old fortress, which is located in Transylvania, near the tiny village of Stegiocavar.

But getting there will be tough. Just as our heroes are about to set out for Romania, the country erupts in violence and a cabal of military officers (all of them secret worshippers of Death's Sting) seize power in

the very part of the country they need to visit. Includes extensive notes on Romania, and two sample roadblocks that the PCs may have to fight or bluff their way past.

Chapter Five: The Village

The PCs arrive in Stegiocavar with no time to lose. They may or may not spend any time here. In case they do, numerous NPCs and location descriptions have been provided for the GM to flesh the village out with.

The villagers are eager to show off the castle, which they have been unsuccessfully trying to turn into a tourist attraction and would be happy to guide the PCs there. But there is a complication.

As we mentioned in the "Background" section above, sixty years ago the Nazis also found out about the return of Death's Sting. Using a time machine, the SS sent one of their "Special Units" of super-soldiers into the future, to destroy Death's Sting at the moment of his return. They are about to appear, right in the middle of Stegiocavar.

At midnight on the night before Death's Sting returns, the Nazi super-soldiers step out of the past and start herding up the villagers. Then they move to take possession of the castle and prepare for the arrival of Death's Sting. They will not make common cause with the Player Characters, even though they have a common enemy. The PCs will either have to beat them to the castle or fight their way past them once they get there.

Chapter Six: Don't Go Near the Castle!

This chapter contains a room-by-room description of the fortress of Death's Sting, and the catacombs that lie beneath it. The Lieber Malodourum reveals that Death's Sting will rise from his crypt in the center of the catacombs. The Nazi Ubersoldaten will be waiting for him there, unless the PCs have already beaten them. Unfortunately, the Nazis don't realize that this crypt is a decoy—the real crypt is buried in a hidden chamber sixty feet beneath them. When Death's Sting returns to the realm of the living at midnight, he is going to be able to hit them from behind.

Includes notes on the various ways the PCs might fight or bluff their way past the Ubersoldaten and get to the crypt first.

Chapter Seven: "O Grave, Where is Thy Victory?"

At midnight, Death's Sting returns. His powers are at low ebb, but he's still a fearsome (PL15) opponent. How well equipped the PCs are to face him will depend on how they have solved the challenges that came before. If, for example, they have managed to secure the time machine that the Nazis arrived with, then they can use it in a novel way that is almost certain to destroy Death's Sting.

Aftermath

The Player Characters may very well have beaten Death's Sting, but they might also have been defeated by him. This section describes what might happen next in either case, and what Death's Sting will do if he has escaped to become an ongoing menace to your campaign world. It also tells you how the Nazi super-soldiers will react if they are stranded in the 21st Century, and how the GM should handle things if the PCs then turn their attention to overthrowing the military junta that has taken over Transylvania.

CHAPTER ONE: THINGS START SMALL

Ken Cantrick, the Abyssal Dragon Prince of the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death, has been spying on Barry Robinson for nearly a year, and he determined that the amateur occultist keeps a copy of the *Liber Malerudorum* in his bank's safety deposit box. While Robinson is unaware of the exact value of his find, he does know that he paid a lot of money for it, and he intends to keep it safe until he can find another buyer. Cantrick has not been able to find out which box Robinson uses, so he has hired a professional safecracker and intends to have him open every box in the vault. If this fails (and it will) he has a back-up plan (see Chapter 2: The Taking).

Just after noon, Cantrick and several of his minions start coming into the bank, a few at a time. There should be one thug for every hero, plus two more, and one elite thug–an expert safecracker named Otis Dane. We've provided sample stats and background information for the cultists and their hired safecracker at the end of this chapter, on Pages 19-22. You can find Ken Cantrick's stats in Appendix A, on Page 96.

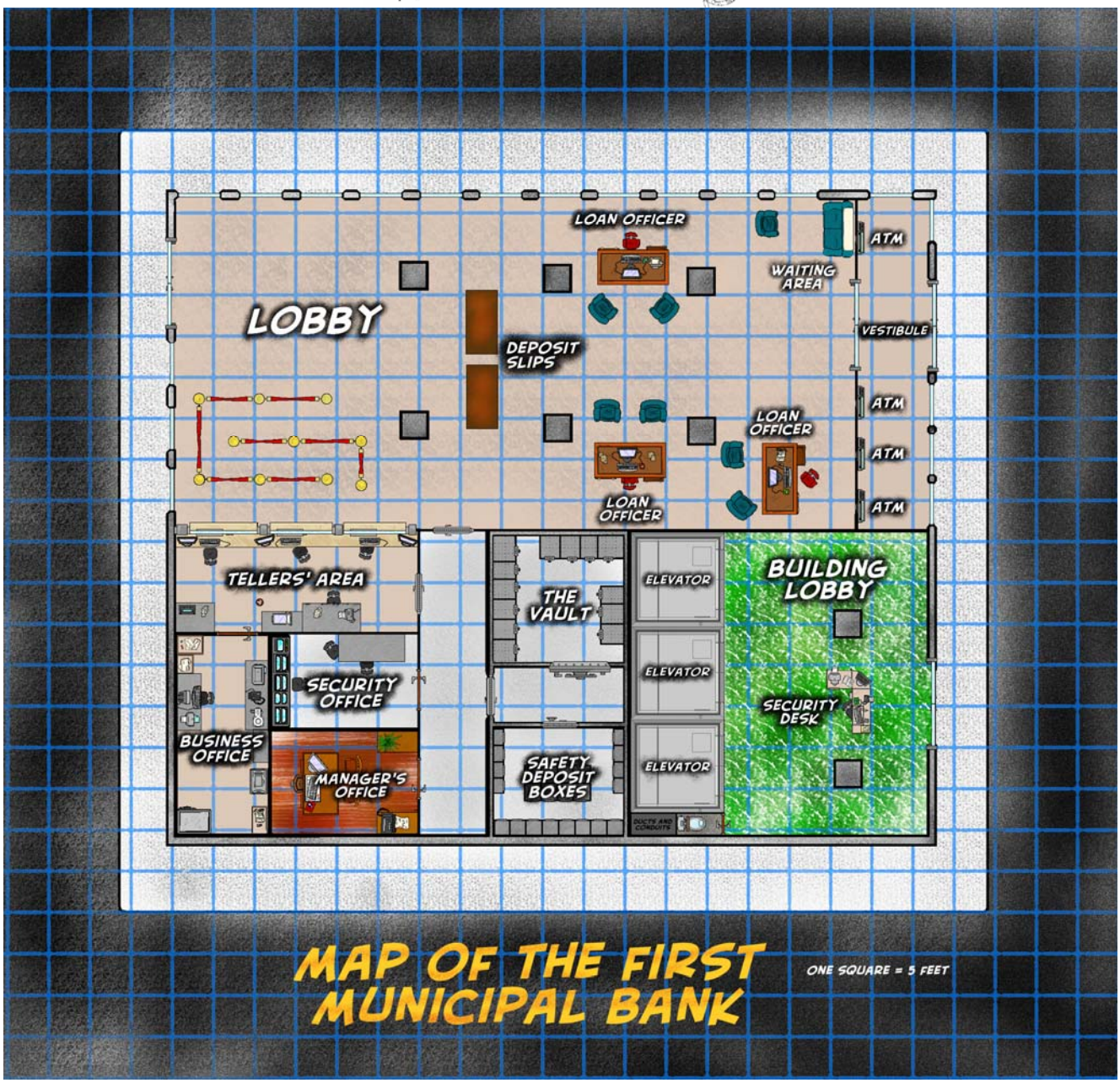
When the last of the cultists arrives, they draw their weapons and take the bank personnel and any customers hostage. The robbers hustle their hostages into a shielded corner of the bank, close the blinds in the lobby, and wait while Otis Dane heads into the safe deposit vault and starts picking the locks on the boxes. (They are only average locks, but he still takes 20 on each.). One of the hostages manages to dial 911 on her cell phone, leaving the channel open so that the operator can hear what's happening. Tracing the call to the bank, the operator sends a message to the police, who quickly converge on the situation in progress. Heroes who monitor the police band will also hear the alert, or, if the group has a good relationship with the police, they might be specifically called in. Alternatively, the heroes could "just happen to be in the area" as the robbery begins. It happens in the comics all the time.

The Bank

First Municipal is a typical middle-market downtown branch bank. Most of its customers are ordinary office workers who hold personal accounts here. Really rich people do their business elsewhere, at more exclusive institutions. Barry Robinson banks here purely out of convenience—they're the first bank he happened to notice near a theater and a bookstore that he likes. When he goes downtown, he can visit them all at once.

First Municipal Bank occupies most of the ground floor of a shiny new ten-story building, done in an architectural style best described as "neo-brutalist." The offices of an accounting firm and a temp agency cover the floor above it. Like most downtown branch banks, this one doesn't have a drive-though. The building's main lobby is on the other side from the bank's entrances and does not connect with the bank proper.

The building's external walls are pretty sturdy—Toughness 10. Its large windows (which reach right down to the sidewalk) and exterior glass doors are heavily reinforced and have a Toughness of 5. Because the lower edges of the windows are flush with the level of the ground, you could walk right into the ban's lobby without having to jump over a sill or slow down. The interior walls on its upper floors are largely made of flimsy drywall, but the bank level is much more solidly built. See individual room descriptions for the strength of each room's walls. Place the hostages and the cultists wherever you like inside the bank—do whatever seems dramatically appropriate.



Outside

The Police may or may not already be on the scene. It's up to the GM. If the cops are here (you can find stats for them at the end of Scene 3, on Pages 45-48) then they are holding back at the perimeter. The PCs have the bank to themselves.

The GM should probably try to make the bank's exterior look ominous and menacing to the PCs, since they are about to risk their lives in combat here against an unknown threat. If at all possible, it should be cold and raining as the Player Characters arrive. Describe the angry gray sky, the way the huge ugly building looms over them. No movement is visible inside. There is no sound but the traffic and the rain. The bank assault takes place in the middle of the day, and it's darker inside the building than out, making it very hard to see through its high, narrow windows. The blinds are closed. Anything could be lurking in there.

ATM Vestibule

This area contains four automatic teller machines. After business hours, the outer doors can be opened with an account-holder's ATM card. Right now both sets of doors are unlocked. The lights are still on in the vestibule but the lobby is dark, making it hard to see through the inner doors.

Lobby

The cultists have turned off the lights inside the bank, leaving the lobby in gloom. The floor is a nasty beige with a fake marble pattern and it echoes unpleasantly, magnifying every sound (-2 to Stealth Checks). The interior wall of the lobby is heavily reinforced to protect the offices and vaults behind it, and is Toughness 10. The two big wooden tables hold deposit slips. Each one weighs 400 pounds and does 4 damage if a PC decides to pick it up and hit someone with it. This branch didn't have a full-time security guard stationed in the lobby, and there is no station for one to stand in. The brass poles which hold up the velvet ropes in front of the teller windows weigh 40 pounds each and do 3 damage if used as weapons.

While you could have the PCs face the cultists here, it might be more dramatic if the lobby is eerily deserted and silent, but the door that leads back to the tellers area and the business offices hangs open. The door itself is made of steel, and is Toughness 8.

Loan Officer Desks

Three assistant managers have desks in this part of the lobby. They conduct most of the bank's customer relations here, taking loan applications, signing people up for accounts and safety deposit boxes. Each desk weighs 500 pounds and does 4 damage if picked up and used as a bludgeoning weapon. The heavy stuffed chairs weigh 60 pounds each and do 3 damage.

Waiting Area

This corner of the lobby contains a couch and two chairs for customers to sit on while they wait for an assistant manager to become available. The chairs weigh 60 pounds each and do 2 damage if you hit someone with them. The couch weighs 200 pounds and does 3 damage, but it's badly balanced and anyone who tries to pick it up an hit something with it will suffer a -2 penalty.

Tellers' Area

This long, narrow space contains just enough room for three tellers, their workstations and some cabinets of supplies. The bulletproof glass in the teller windows is Toughness 6. The rolling chairs which the tellers sit on weigh 45 pounds each and do 3 damage if used as weapons. Each of teller's drawer contains between $800 and $2,000. A steel door at the back (Toughness 8) connects with the Business Office.

Business Office

A mismatched assemblage of furniture and office equipment fills this cramped, awkwardly-shaped room. Most of the bank's administrative work takes place here, so it has a credit card machine, filing cabinets, bill-counting machines and all the other supplies you'd expect to find in a busy office. It also holds the bank's day-safe, which contains about $10,000 in cash. All the assistant managers and the chief teller know the combination. This keeps them from having to get the manager and open up the vault whenever a teller's drawer runs out of bills.

The chairs and tables here weigh 45 and 150 pounds, respectively, and each does 3 damage if used as an improvised weapon. The copy machine weighs 300 pounds and does 4 damage. The office supplies here could technically be used as improvised weapons, too, but it would take far too much space to list them all individually. The GM should decide on an ad hoc basis how much damage it does if anyone tries shooting someone with a stapler, poking them with paperclips or pencils, holding their head down on the scanner, etc.

Hallway

Only bank employees or customers who have come to view their safety deposit boxes or been invited to the manager's office are allowed into this hall. No one but an employee is ever supposed to be here unescorted.

The metal door which leads in from the lobby is Toughness 8, but the PCs won't have to break it open—it's been left ajar. The lights are off and there aren't any exterior windows here, leaving the hallway deep in shadowy gloom. The light switch is next to the door, if a PC thinks to look for it. The hallway itself is completely unfurnished and doesn't really contain any good places to hide.

The walls of the business office and the branch manager's office aren't nearly as tough as most of the bank's interior structure. Both are a mere Toughness 5, while the door to the manager's office is only Toughness 3. The walls on the other side of the corridor are another matter—that's where the vault and safety deposit boxes are, and they are meant to withstand a supervillain assault (toughness 15).

Manager's Office

The Branch Manager isn't here right now and her office doesn't really reflect much about her. She is new, and hasn't had time to get really settled in. Her only contribution to the room's décor is the set of hard wooden chairs that she brought in for visitors to sit on—she feels that making people sit in uncomfortable chairs helps to keep the balance of power where it ought to be.

There is a hardwood floor, an expensive desk, a cabinet or two and a dying potted plant. There are no windows, and her predecessor's efforts to cheer the place up by hanging pastel seascapes on the wall isn't really a success.

The door to the office is locked and it's toughness 3. The interior wall is toughness 5, and the exterior wall is Toughness 10. The big heavy office chair behind the desk weighs 80 pounds and does 4 damage if it's used as a weapon. The little hard wooden chairs that guests sit in weigh 30 pounds and do 3 damage. There is a letter opener on the desk but it isn't very sharp. It does 2 damage if used as a stabbing weapon.

Security Office

This branch employs only one full-time security guard, whose job mostly consists of watching the cameras in this room. The bank has never been robbed before and he's been getting kind of sloppy. He called in sick today, so one of the tellers was watching the monitors, part time. There are no weapons in here, although you could pick up one of the 45 pound chairs and hit someone with it for 3 damage.

Hallway #2

The door to this hall is made of steel and has 8 toughness. It is normally kept locked, but Otis Dane has already opened it.

The Vault

Only the Branch Manager has the key and combination to the vault. As it happens, she was out of the office when the cult attacked the bank, leaving no one inside who knows how to get the vault open. This poses no obstacle to the cultists—that's why they brought Otis Dane. The vault's walls and door are both Toughness 15.

Safety Deposit Boxes

Here is the cult's real target. Otis Dane is inside, busily trying to open all the boxes. He won't find the right one in time.

The walls of this room are Toughness 15 and the safety deposit boxes themselves are each Toughness 8. If you were to rip a box out and try to hit someone with it, it would do 3 damage.

This bank has relatively few customers with deposit boxes, and their arrangements for these patrons are extremely basic. There is no special room in which to review the contents of your box, nor is there anywhere to sit down. If two customers were to come open their boxes at the same time, they wouldn't have any privacy from each other (this has never yet come up, to the manager's relief).

Barry Robinson's box is Number 33112, on the bottom row at the left-hand side of the central block of boxes, facing the door.

Otis Dane is opening all the boxes in order, from top to bottom and right to left. It would take him hours to get down to Barry Robinson's. He has no chance of reaching it before the PCs put the robbery to an end.

Building Lobby

The offices above the bank are accessed through this lobby. It does not connect directly to First Municipal. Tiled in shiny green marble, with three large elevators, it could serve as an unexpected route into the bank for resourceful PCs with the right combination of powers.

An unarmed security guard normally sits at a desk in the middle of the lobby, but once the current crisis arose she left in a hurry. Her computer is still on, and displays video feeds from the security cameras in the elevators, lobby and the halls on the upper floors. The security cameras in the bank are, alas, on a different system altogether and can't be accessed from this desk.

The elevator walls have a Toughness of 8, and the wall behind them has a Toughness of 10. A super-strong character might be able to rip their way into the bank in just a couple of rounds, catching the cultists totally by surprise. Alternatively, an Immaterial character could step through the rear wall and hit the robbers from an unexpected angle.

The Upper Floors

It's possible that the PCs could attack the bank robbers through the ceiling. There are no superhumans taking part in the robbery, so it's unlikely that any PCs would get knocked through the roof in the course of the fight. The floors and ceilings are Toughness 8 everywhere but over the vault and safety deposit boxes, where they have been reinforced to Toughness 15.

While we don't have space to detail every floor of a ten-story building, on the off-chance that the PCs might wander up there, we can give you some general notes on what the upper floors are like.

All of the upper floors have roughly the same layout. An "L" shaped hallway leads down from the elevators and turns left at the front of the building, running along a row of windows. This divides the space into one or two big offices on the left and one or more little skinny offices on the right of the elevators.

For the most part the building is occupied by white collar business firms. Financial planning, marketing and money-management services and other such offices occupy the upper floors. There are no doctor or dentist offices, no insurance or travel agencies in the building.

On the floor directly above the bank, there are just two offices. A large public relations firm has a suite in the big space to the left of the elevators (over the bank's business offices, teller area, the vaults, the manager's office and most of the lobby).

Across the hall, in the long skinny space to the right of the escalators, is a temp agency (over the building's main lobby, the ATM vestibule and a small slice of the bank lobby).

All the office workers have been evacuated from the second floor, unless the GM thinks it would be dramatically appropriate for the PCs to stumble over some frightened civilian huddled behind their desk.

ATTACK ON THE BANK

When the heroes make themselves known, Cantrick immediately orders his minions to fight them, while he himself makes an extended teleport to a parking garage roughly half a mile away. (His followers are fanatics, and so don't view this as a desertion.) Cantrick then hops into the trunk of a getaway car, and has the minion waiting in the driver's seat get him out of the area.

When the cultists are defeated, Otis Dane (the safecracker) walks out of the safety deposit box room with his hands over his head and surrenders. He isn't a fanatic, or even a member of the cult, but rather a hired gun (figuratively speaking) who certainly didn't sign up to fight superheroes! There is a description of him on page 22.

AFTER THE BATTLE

The police will take all the criminals into custody. Again, depending on the team's relationship with the police, the heroes might be invited to sit in on the interrogations that follow.

Otis Dane, a professional bank robber, tells everything he knows in an attempt to get a good deal from the D.A. He's a hard-core expert criminal, and judges have a way of throwing the book at guys like him. Otis is starting to get on a bit in years, he's already spent a good portion of his life in prison and he's liable to die there if he doesn't manage to negotiate a good plea bargain. Unfortunately, he doesn't know much. Hired through intermediaries, he was told only that he was supposed to open the boxes until he found one containing a certain book. He also knows that the man who teleported away was the leader of the group, and that he mentioned that the book belongs to someone named Barry Robinson.

The other prisoners refuse to say anything, but they won't ask for lawyers either. (Lawyers are part of the corrupt system that they have rejected.) Of course, the police can't ask any telepathic heroes to probe the prisoners' minds, since that would be an unconscionable violation of their civil rights. On the other hand, if a private citizen, acting on his or her own initiative, were to conduct such a probe, that would be completely different. (Or possibly not, depending on the laws of your campaign world.)

If the heroes do probe the cultists' minds they discover that none of them know much more than Otis Dane. They know that their leader is the Abyssal Dragon Prince, and that their actions are part of a plan that will sweep away the corrupt and dissolute modern world, etc., etc. They also know where the cult is headquartered: a ranch-style complex located several miles outside of city limits.

If the police learn where the cult is headquartered, they'll contact the state troopers and have someone check the place out. Unfortunately, the state trooper who patrols the area, (his name is Leslie Gaddis), has been bribed to report nothing but a "quiet, inoffensive bunch of religious nuts", no matter what he sees or hears. (Alternatively, the cult could be blackmailing Trooper Gaddis, or he might have family who have been taken hostage to ensure his compliance).

Although the PCs are unlikely to meet him, we have stats and background information for Trooper Gaddis on Page 45. His back-story explains why he would take a bribe from someone like Ken Cantrick. It's easy to change if you would rather have the cult get leverage over him by threatening his loved ones.

The police will eventually contact Barry Robinson to see if he has any idea why someone would want to steal his book. He doesn't, of course, but the fact that someone did try to steal it arouses his curiosity. He decides to take a closer look at the tome as soon as possible. Since Otis Dane, the safecracker, didn't have time to find the book before the heroes arrived, it is still in its box and hasn't been taken into evidence by the police.

The heroes might head out to the ranch headquarters of the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death. If they approach the place openly, they'll be greeted at the main

gate by a cultist who claims to be the Abyssal Dragon Prince (he is in fact a former late night infomercial pitchman named Arnold Spangler—see his stats and description on Page 35). Spangler denies knowing anything about any robbery, and if he is shown pictures of the captured cultists he states that he's never seen any of them before. He's lying, of course, but if he is called on it, he will refuse to answer any more questions and order the heroes off of the cult's property.

There is a faint chance that a Player Character might recognize Spangler from his stint on late night television. Of course, most superheroes have better things to do than watch infomercials, but you never know. Recognizing him from "Your Pet's Psychic Abilities", "Visualizing Your Path to a Better Mortgage" or "Lose Weight the Voodoo Way" requires a Notice check vs. DC 15 followed by a Knowledge (Popular Culture) check vs. DC 20. If they make the Notice check but fail the Popular Culture check, they get an eerie feeling that they've seen him somewhere before.

It will be difficult and time-consuming to obtain a search warrant for the ranch (and depending on the tactics that the heroes used to get the information that led them there, it might even be impossible.) A more covert approach to investigating the ranch is discussed in Chapter 3.

The heroes could also talk to Barry Robinson. He'll be surprised to learn that superheroes are taking an interest in the case, and this piques his curiosity about the *Liber Malerudorum* even more. Barry will tell the heroes what he told the police: he has no idea why anyone would try to steal a compilation of obscure astrological data and murky prophecies. He will also reveal to them that he plans to get the book out of the bank and take a look at it as soon as possible.

Canny heroes might try to persuade Robinson that it's a bad idea for him to take the book home. Don't let them rely on their skills and abilities to do this—roleplay it!

Robinson wants very much to have a look at this mysterious volume. He might even suggest that if the heroes are really concerned about another attempt to take the book, they can watch over him. If any of the heroes are famous, Robinson will mention that his daughters are big fans, and would really like to meet them.

Finally, the heroes might try to track down Ken Cantrick by figuring out the destination of his teleport. If they manage to do this, then lead them to the parking garage. None of the attendants saw anything unusual, and the only security camera operating in the area is the one that shows entrances and exits from the building. It will reveal that a number of vehicles left the garage around the time in question. Tracking them down by their license plates will reveal that one of them is a rental car – obtained, unfortunately, by someone using a phony I.D and a bogus credit card. In other words, this is probably a dead end.

Adjusting the Challenge for Your PCs

While it's certainly tense to assault the bank from the outside, without knowing who or what is in there, the excitement may fade swiftly when the PCs discover just how weak the opposition really is. There are a couple of ways to beef it up, if you think they'd get bored or annoyed by overcoming the cultists so quickly.

You can change the cultists' tactics by having each one take a hostage, and spreading them out in different rooms. Every time the PCs enter a room they have a different hostage situation to face, with an unpredictable cultist who behaves differently from the others the PCs have encountered. A whole group of hostages are being watched over by a cultist in the Security Office, who can see the PCs on the security monitors and who is wearing a Damage 8 (10 foot Burst Radius) exploding suicide vest.

Or, if that still doesn't provide your PCs with enough of a challenge, Ken Cantrick has sacrificed one of his cultists outside the vault door (they are lying in a bloody heap inside a hastily sketched pentagram) and summoned a demon for extra muscle. Use one of the two demons from Scene 3, on Pages 44-45.

NPCs for the Bank Assault
Here is a set of premade non-player characters for the bank scene. We've included both villains and innocent bystanders for you to use. We'll start with some hostages and move on to the cultists.

Generic Hostage
PL: 0

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: +0 **Attack Bonus**: +0
Defense: +0 **Toughness Save:** 1
Fortitude Save: 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 0

Skills: Bluff 2 (+2), Diplomacy 3 (+3), Drive 1 (+2), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+3), Notice 2 (+2), Profession (any) 3 (+3), Sense Motive 1 (+1), Stealth 1 (+2)
Background: Here are some stats for a generic worker or customer at the First Municipal Bank. While we are calling them "hostages" for want of a better name, none of the cultists will actually threaten to kill them or try to use any of them as human shields.

Whether they keep their heads and do their best to help the PCs or get in the way and become a hindrance is strictly up to the GM. It's hard to predict how a given person will react in a crisis. In addition to this generic template, we have some individual personalities you can throw in if need be, listed below. Some are employees, some are customers. Whether or not any of them happen to be at the bank today is up to the GM.

Norman Otinka
PL: 3

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 1
Defense: 3 (+3 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Concentrate 1 (+4), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 3 (+5), Languages (French, Hausa, English), Notice +2 (+5), Profession (Assistant Bank Manager) 4 (+6), Sense Motive 3 (+6), Stealth 4 (+5)
Feats: Interpose
Complications: Code of Honor (would give his life to save any of his employees or customers)
Background: One of the assistant managers, Mr. Otinka is a recent immigrant from Sierra Leone. He's a white-haired, balding, fatherly man with a heavy accent and wire-rimmed glasses. A civil engineer by trade, he's supporting himself working at the bank and at a discount electronic warehouse on the weekends until he can find something in his field. It's been seven years now, but he maintains his optimism.

A kind, considerate, thoughtful man, he speaks slowly and always wears a sad smile. He takes his responsibility as assistant manager very seriously and will regretfully give his life up for his customers or the tellers if he must. Physically brave, he saw quite a bit of violence back in his native country and isn't fazed by it at all. Exceedingly calm in the midst of this crisis, his first priority is to make sure that all the customers and junior staff get out alive. His second priority is to get out in one piece himself and make it home to his wife and four kids. The bank's money comes in a distant third and he doesn't care one way or the other about whether or not the robbers escape. He bears them no rancor in any case—he just doesn't want them to kill anyone.

Bob Wolf
PL: 1

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 1
Defense: 1 (+1 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2 **Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Bluff 5 (+7), Climb 2 (+4), Drive 2 (+3), Intimidate 4 (+6), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 1 (+2), Notice +2 (+2), Profession (Assistant Bank Manager) 4 (+5), Stealth 4 (+5)
Background: Loud and overbearing, First Municipal's second assistant manager was once a frat-boy, and it shows. He's big and

blonde, starting to get thick around the middle and to go prematurely gray. Pushy and aggressive, he grins a lot, but it looks angry and insincere. He has no regard for anyone but himself and is willing to betray any of his patrons or co-workers to save his own hide (he'd also do it for five bucks, or just on a whim).

Bob lives with his girlfriend in an apartment in a tredy part of town. He'd love to think of himself as a yuppie, but doesn't make quite enough money. Lately he's started hitting on one of the tellers, Anna Ng, mostly out of boredom and because it gets her all flustered. This does not mean that he is willing to take one iota of risk to help her.

Grimly competent under pressure, he may be a bit of a jerk, but he's no coward, and will do his best to help the PCs with any plan that involves getting himself safely out of the bank. He is not however willing to attack the robbers unless the PCs get him a gun.

To add an extra wrinkle, you might want to tell one of the PCs that they've seen Bob before, in their secret identity, yelling at his girlfriend and being obnoxious in a sports-bar downtown.

Anna Ng
PL: 0

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 10 (+0)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: +1 **Attack Bonus**: +0
Defense: +0 **Toughness Save:** 0
Fortitude Save: 0 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 0

Skills: Diplomacy 2 (+5), Handle Animal 3 (+6), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 1 (+2), Language (Vietnamese), Profession (Bank Teller) 4 (+5), Notice 2 (+2), Sense Motive 2 (+2), Stealth 2 (+3)

Background: The prettiest of the three tellers, Anna works hard and keeps her head down, socializing little with her co-workers. She is painfully shy.

Unfortunately, one of the assistant managers, the obnoxious Mr. Bob Wolf, has noticed her fragile beauty and has begun crudely flirting with her at every opportunity. This really bothers her, but he outranks her and she doesn't know who to report him to. She lives in a group house with some other young Vietnamese people in the suburbs, but none of them are close enough for her to confide something like this to, and her fiancé is so straightlaced and traditional that she fears that he would blame her for Bob's behavior. So she has told no one.

Anna is holding up fairly well under the stress of being a hostage, for even though she doesn't like Bob Wolf, she is sure that he cares for her and that he will find some way to protect her. Nothing could be further from the truth. Bob would gladly sell Anna (or his own grandmother) out for a nickel.

If she gets a chance to do something to help the PCs thwart the robbers, there is a roughly 50% chance that she'll take it and a 50% chance that she'll panic halfway through, and run blindly for the exit, where there is a possibility that the police may shoot her by mistake.

Rolanda Greene
PL: 0

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: +1 **Attack Bonus**: +0
Defense: +0 **Toughness Save:** 1
Fortitude Save: 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 2

Skills: Bluff 2 (+4), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 5 (+5), Notice 1 (+3), Profession (Bank Teller) 3 (+3), Sense Motive 3 (+5)

Complications: Can't stop talking when she's under stress.

Background: The bank's newest teller, she is a carefree, jovial young African-American woman who dresses as flamboyantly as she can get away with at work. She never seems to take anything seriously. Rolanda is overweight, but doesn't bother dressing to conceal it—guys love her anyway.

Her easy laugh and rapid banter mask a weary life. She's a single mom, and this is one of the three part-time jobs she works to keep afloat. She lives on the outer edge of the suburbs (she moved there to

get as far away from the inner city as possible) with another single mom in an apartment she can barely afford, and constantly struggles to get rides downtown.

She was tired when she came in today and now she can't seem to stop nervously talking to herself, the robbers, her fellow hostages and anyone else she comes into contact with. She's sick with fear, sure her blabbermouth is going to get her killed at any second, but doesn't seem to be able to cut off the flow of words.

Her first priority is to find a way to get home before her sitter leaves at six-thirty. Her daughter is much too young to take care of herself, and the sitter has walked out before when Rolanda has come in late. In her terror, she has fixated completely on the need to get there in time. Even her fears about her own safety are subsumed by it.

Esperanza Diaz
PL: 0

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 14 (+2) **Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: +0 **Attack Bonus**: +0
Defense: +0 **Toughness Save:** 2
Fortitude Save: 2 **Reflexes Save:** 0
Willpower Save: -1

Skills: Bluff 4 (+5), Diplomacy 2 (+3), Intimidate 3 (+5), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 4 (+4), Profession (Bank Teller) 2 (+2), Sense Motive 2 (+1), Stealth 2 (+3)
Complications: Angry, hates everybody.
Background: A thin, hard-looking, prematurely old twenty-nine, Esperanza spends so much time scowling and has worn such deep lines in her face that she looks like she's in her late thirties. Bitter, mean and hostile, she never married (her personality drives boyfriends away) and has lived with her parents and bounced from one bank-teller job to another her whole adult life. Invariably she quarrels with her co-workers, causes fights and bad feelings, and then moves on to another job once things have become unbearable. Incapable of empathy, she hates anyone happier than herself, which is to say everyone. She especially hates Rolanda Greene, for various petty reasons that wouldn't make sense to anyone else.

Incredibly, Esperanza's primary objective in this situation will be to find some way to get Rolanda in trouble with the robbers. This is actually more important to her than her own safety (she's too self-absorbed to imagine herself coming to harm).

If directly threatened, Esperanza screams and curls up into a ball.

Glendon Meeks
PL: 0

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** 10 (+0) **Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: -1 **Attack Bonus**: 0
Defense: 0 **Toughness Save:** 0
Fortitude Save: 0 **Reflexes Save:** -1
Willpower Save: 0

Skills: Bluff 2 (+4), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Profession (Advertising Executive) 2 (+4)
Complications: Absent-minded, scared out of his wits.
Background: Richer than a typical patron or the First Municipal, he banks here purely because it's convenient—his office is just across the street. A Vice President at a large advertising firm, he more or less inherited his position, hates his job and spends most of his time reading adventure novels and watching action films. He always has a distracted air, for he's constantly fantasizing about being somewhere else on some kind of incredible adventure. His underlings and colleagues mistake this look for deep thought.

Now that Meeks is actually faced with some real life adventure, he isn't ready for it. Paralyzed with fear, he's as helpless as a baby and won't be able to help the PCs or his fellow hostages at all. Much too scared to follow instructions, if the PCs tell him to run, he'll get confused and stand in the middle of the room, looking frightened and bewildered. If they tell him to hide, he'll start shrieking. If they tell him to keep his head down, he won't be able to. He will in all likelihood have to be carried out of the bank.

Meeks is a big, portly, white-haired man in an expensive Brooks Brothers' suit. He looks like an authority figure with his bulk, his expensive clothes and shock of white hair, but he's not going to be able to take charge of anything here. His wife does everything for him at home and his assistant takes care of him at work. Between the two of them, they have managed to keep his career on track for decades. But of course neither of them are here right now.

Mr. Meeks has no children, which perhaps is for the best. His wife jokes that she already has her hands full.

Zia Rachman
PL: 1

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 1
Defense: 1 **Toughness Save:** 0
Fortitude Save: 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 1

Skills: Bluff 4 (+5), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Languages (English, Arabic), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Street Vendor) 4 (+5), Stealth 3 (+4)
Background: A street vendor, Zia Rachman had the bad luck to step into the bank to buy a few rolls of change just as it was about to get robbed. He doesn't even hold an account here.

An illegal immigrant from Lebanon, Zia runs a hot dog stand over on the next block. He's scared, but not so much about his personal safety. He's worried that the cops are going to find out that he's an illegal immigrant, or that something will happen to his stand while he's away from it. He buys his own merchandise, but he rents his stand, and if something happens to it, he can't pay the owners back. He also can't afford to lose a day's worth of merchandise—the margin he operates on is just too narrow. His whole life will be ruined if anything happens to that stand, and he is very focused on making sure that this does not occur.

While Zia is keeping his cool, his aversion to the police is going to make rescuing him tricky. He regards costumed superheroes as just another kind of cop and he's quite sure that if he lets them take him anywhere, he'll wind up getting deported. He is willing to listen to reason, and will become much more cooperative if a PC figures out what the problem is and explains to him that they have no intention of checking his immigration status.

A handsome young man with curly brown hair, he always seems to have a trace of five o'clock shadow. Zia's English is fairly good, but he has a noticeable accent. He's single, and although he's shy and formal around women, he would very much like to find a girlfriend (he's not devout and doesn't care if she's a Muslim).

Madison Oaks
PL: 0

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 10 (+0)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: -1 **Attack Bonus**: +0
Defense: +0 **Toughness Save:** 0
Fortitude Save: 0 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 0

Skills: Bluff 2 (+5), Diplomacy 3 (+6), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 6 (+6), Notice 2 (+2), Profession (Financial Consultant) 2 (+4)
Feats: Attractive
Background: Pretty, blonde, thoughtless, selfish and callous, she went straight from being one of the most popular girls in her high school to being one of the most popular girls in her sorority to a job with a financial consulting firm. It won't occur to her to help anyone else, and while she will be pleased if the PCs rescue her, she won't be especially grateful—they were just doing what they were supposed, to, after all. She isn't cruel, doesn't take pleasure in other people's discomfort, she just doesn't notice it.

Not especially ambitious, Madison gets by on her talent and her looks without having to try very hard at anything. Cheerful and carefree, she likes to have fun, likes being pretty and successful, and doesn't have time to worry about much else. She's really scared now, but hasn't lost her head completely. She will hurry to comply

with anything the PCs or the bank robbers tell her to do.

If the PCs don't intervene, Madison may make a terrible error—she will try to ingratiate herself with her captors, and this will draw the attention of Eustacia Wellmaker (see her description below). Eustacia is a quiet little bookworm with a troubled past. She took a lot of abuse in school from girls like Madison, and she can smell the aura of a popular girl on her. Eustacia isn't normally a sadist, but if Madison annoys her too much she may begin to toy with her in ugly, cruel ways This could get out of control fast.

Madison's fiancé, Brandon Stortz, is in an interminable meeting at the law firm where he works (he's a paralegal) and won't find out about her plight until hours after the fact. She is shocked that he didn't rush down to the bank to make sure that she was all right, and will break up with him for it, until he buys her a really expensive sapphire necklace, which perfectly brings out her deep blue eyes. Unless of course Eustacia Wellmaker has already spoiled her good looks forever.

Generic Cultist
PL: 2

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 2
Defense: 2 (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Drive 2 (+2), Intimidate 4 (+3), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+2), Notice +2 (+2), Profession (Whatever they did before they joined the cult) 4 (+5), Stealth 4 (+4)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 points worth), Sneak Attack
Equipment: Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Light-Caliber Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)
Background: The cultists all wear ceremonial robes with the symbol of Death's Sting emblazoned on the front, pointed hoods that cover their faces, and goggles. They look pretty threatening for a bunch of disposable PL 2 minions.

Individual Cultists

Below, we have listed a few individual personalities you can sprinkle into the group of cultists who assault the bank, just to make things more interesting.

Burt Naulls
PL: 2

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 2
Defense: 2 (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Drive 2 (+2), Intimidate 4 (+3), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+2), Notice +2 (+2), Profession (Engineer) 4 (+5), Stealth 4 (+4)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 points worth), Fearless
Equipment: Body Armor (3pts), Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Light-Caliber Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)
Complications: Vicious fanatic, willing to kill or die for his cult
Background: An angry, bitter, defeated man, Burt used to be an engineer at a large telecommunications company you've probably heard of. He thought his whole career would be spent toiling away for them, that he would one day be rewarded with a pension and an easy retirement. A chronic grumbler, he got along with no one and was never able to find a wife. His work kept him going, as did his stamp collection and his love of the occult (he favored the lengthy, precise, tedious rituals of the Hermetic tradition). He hated work, but it was all he had, apart from his dry and dusty hobbies. Then his job got outsourced. His department lost half of its staff, and every one of the people who got to stay was less talented, but more congenial than Burt.

It's very hard for telecom engineers to find new jobs in their field once they've been fired or outsourced. Burt didn't know this until he started looking. After having delivered pizza and worked as a gas station attendant for years, he decided to find a way to hurt the world back. The Reformed

Church of the Sting of Death was happy to provide him with one.

These days Burt lives for his hate, yearning for the day Death's Sting returns to cleanse the world with flame. The good, the bad, the wicked and the blameless all shall burn and scream—this thought gives him the strength to carry on for another day.

He is a fanatic and will gladly kill or die for Death's Sting. Nothing in his life ever gave him much pleasure, so he doesn't mind throwing it away.

Burt killed a prostitute once, years before he joined up with Ken Cantrick. He was never caught, and he hasn't killed anyone since, but he knows he's capable of murder and he knows it won't give him any pangs of conscience, so he'll do it without flinching when the time comes.

A skinny, wiry man, Burt has a long, sour face, creased with premature wrinkles and an untidy mop of white hair. His mouth is a thin compressed line of anger. He speaks quietly and slowly, as though just barely able to restrain himself from screaming. He picks his words with precise care and stands ramrod straight. He works out as much as he has time to, but his scrawny frame never seems to pick up much muscle. He makes a constant effort to keep his hands from clenching into fists.

Hubert Diggs
PL: 2

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+1) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 2
Defense: 2 (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 2 **Willpower Save:** -1

Skills: Intimidate 4 (+3), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 3 (+4), Notice +2 (+2), Stealth 4 (+4)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 points worth), Fast Overrun, Interpose, Sneak Attack
Equipment: Body Armor (3pts), Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Light-Caliber Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)
Complications: Fanatically loyal to Ken Cantrick, hopelessly irresponsible
Background: As silly and untrustworthy as a puppy, and just as hopelessly loyal, Hubie is the most devoted acolyte Ken Cantrick could ever ask for. He's also totally irresponsible and has no self-control at all. You couldn't trust him to cross the street and buy you a pack of cigarettes. He's a compulsive liar, and has a bad habit of mutilating himself when he gets anxious. These traits got him kicked out of the Army, despite his personal charm and talent for being liked.

Hubie has become obese since leaving the armed forces, but he's in good shape for a man of his weight and his dedication to his leader is total. Ken can trust Hubie absolutely, provided he's there in the same room with him. So long as his idol is in his presence, he will kill, die or do anything else at all for him.

The PCs will probably come to know Hubie as "the short fat one who can't stop nervously giggling". He's been cutting himself recently, and the blood seeps through his robes as he sweats.

Ken treats him with cold, indifferent contempt, sometimes mingled with the faintest trace of affection, and this of course makes him even more fanatically loyal. Not a cruel man by nature, Hubie will do any horrible thing Ken Cantrick instructs him to without hesitation. He's no good at resisting interrogation, and he knows it, but he would sooner die than reveal any of Ken Cantrick's secrets, so he will immediately attempt suicide if he's taken into custody and won't stop trying to kill himself until he succeeds.

Eustacia Wellmaker
PL: 2

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 2
Defense: 2 (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 3 (+4), Notice 2 (+2), Perform (Acting) 3 (+4), Sense Motive 4(+4), Sleight of Hand 5 (+5), Stealth 4 (+4)
Feats: Attractive, Fascinate (linked to

Perform), Equipment 2 (10 points worth)
Equipment: Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Light-Caliber Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)
Background: Shy, withdrawn, quiet and strange, you would never suspect this bespectacled little bookworm of being a triple murderer, and yet she is. Pretty, in a pale, moonfaced kind of way, Eustacia (she hates being called "Stacia" or "Stacy") has lived in a world of elaborate fantasy since she was a little girl. She has an intense, magnetic personality despite her shyness and has been drawing other children into her dangerous imaginary games since first grade. She has always been fascinated by magic and always claimed to be a sorceress (although she's not).

Her stepfather was an advertising executive—a cold and distant drunk who was seldom home. Her mother was a meek, obsessively tidy mouse of a woman who spent most of her time so fogged on prescription tranquilizers that she had barely any personality at all. Neither parent liked or understood Eustacia, so she built her own family out of cast-off kids like herself.

By the time she dropped out of high school Eustacia had a whole cabal of teenage losers and outcasts paying her homage, participating in her useless "magic" rituals and basking in her demented lies. Arnold Spangler sensed that she had potential and invited her into the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death. She was reluctant at first, until she attended one of Ken Cantrick's sermons and discovered what he could do. Here, at long last, was real magic.

She attempted to join the cult and her parents refused to let her, so she talked her own cabal into helping her to kill them. Her little brother wandered into the garage while they were sawing her stepfather's head off, so they killed him too. Two weeks after the murders, one of Eustacia's friends had a psychotic episode and blurted the whole story out to his therapist. The rest of her acolytes were caught within the next few days. Eustacia had already vanished into the arms of the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death without telling anyone. No one has ever found Eustacia, for she kept her secrets well, even from her clique, who presently rot away in various detention facilities and mental hospitals, pining desperately for her return.

Eustacia has suffered nightmares and panic attacks ever since the night she killed her family. She doesn't feel anything but vindictive satisfaction over her stepfather's death and barely feels anything at all about her blank nonentity of a mother. But her little brother's murder haunts her. She can't stop thinking about the terrifying hour they spent chasing him through the house and the woods outside, how she called out to him when he hid in the forest and promised that they weren't going to hurt him, the look in his eyes when he realized that he'd been betrayed.

Convinced that she must be irredeemably evil, Eustacia has wholeheartedly embraced the worship of Death's Sting, even though it's very different from the Wiccan/ Satanist/ Harry Potter mythology that she cobbled together for herself. She has nowhere else to go, no other power to turn to, so she will commit any crime and make any sacrifice in the name of Death's Sting.

For his part, Ken Cantrick has no idea that this wide-eyed, innocent looking young recruit is wanted for three grisly murders. If he did, he would never have put her on the assault team. He just knows that she's absolutely loyal and willing to kill for him.

Eustacia is quiet and intense, with long red hair, bangs and glasses. Always sober, always stoical, she barely ever makes any facial expression except for a kind of vague brooding intensity.

Otis Dane, gun for hire
PL: 7

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 16 (+3) **Int:** 16 (+3) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2) **Initiative:** 4 **Attack Bonus**: 7 **Defense:** 7 (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 7 (3 flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 5 **Reflexes Save:** 7 **Willpower Save:** 5

Skills: Craft (Electronic) 7 (+10), Craft

(Mechanical) 9 (+12), Craft (Structural) 6 (+9), Disable Device (+12), Gather Information 3 (+6), Knowledge (Streetwise) 3 (+5), Profession (Bank Robber) 10 (+12), Stealth 6 (+10), Survival 10 (+12)
Feats: Connected, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 5, Equipment 2, Improved Aim, Skill Mastery (Craft: Electronic, Craft (Mechanical), Disable Device, Survival), Track
Equipment: Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage), Burglar Tools. Often carries a hunting rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage) and owns a set of body armor (Toughness 5) but hasn't brought either one of them with him today.
Background: The only African American member of the team that assaults the bank, he is also the only one who isn't actually a part of the cult. Otis is a career bank robber who takes on occasional muscle work when things are slow. He has a natural talent with machines and can open just about any kind of safe on the market—this is the skill Ken Cantrick hired him for. Yet he is a far more versatile and dangerous thug than a mere safecracker.

He has muscles like bowling balls on his long, ropy arms and he shaves his head completely bald. There are deep smile lines around his deceptively warm eyes.

He grew up in Wyoming, the son of one of the few black homesteading families in the state. An expert shot and superb woodsman, he joined the Marines in 1971, hoping to use the money to get into college. He wasn't too worried about Vietnam. The war was cooling down and he foolishly believed that he could take care of himself over there in any case. He was mistaken. His skill as a hunter and a marksman got him assigned to a Marine Recon unit and sent on countless deadly missions far behind enemy lines. In his single tour of duty he saw such hellish things that he was never quite right again. After the war he couldn't be around people, couldn't hold a job or live a normal life. He tried going back to Wyoming but he quarreled with his family and got kicked off their land. For the next three decades he supported himself as a bank robber and thief, picking up the skills he needed as he went along.

By now he has settled down enough that he can relate to people again. In fact he's charming company, genial and good-humored (when he isn't killing anyone). But he's been a criminal for so long that he's incapable of living a normal life anyway.

Even though he's one of the most successful bank robbers in the country, Otis has spent more than ten of the last twenty years in prison and he's anxious not to go back. He'll gladly tell anyone who captures him everything he knows about Ken Cantrick and his group in exchange for immunity or even a reduced sentence. He feels no loyalty to them or for that matter to anyone. His sense of professional ethics forbids betraying a comrade on a job, but after that it's every man for himself, as far as he is concerned.

Otis kills without remorse, but only when he has to, or when he's paid. He takes no pleasure in snuffing out another human being and avoids it if he can.

It's hard to pick a fight with him, since he has so little left to prove at this stage in his career. People are just more big animals to him—a person screaming taunts or threats means no more to Otis than a growling cougar. Not a nice guy, he is nonetheless a congenial one, although he sometimes grows eerily silent for long periods. He is motivated largely by the desire to go on living for another day. When the PCs meet him, he's anxious and eager to find a way out of his current jam, but once in custody he recovers his composure quickly. He still loves to hunt and spends all of his spare time in the wilderness.

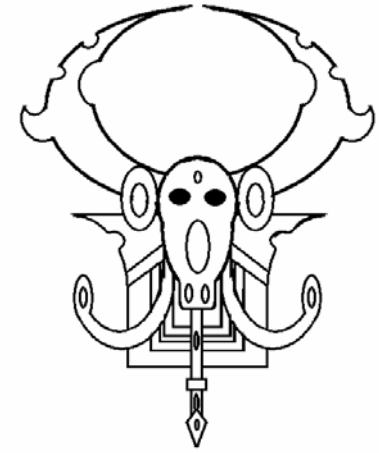
Ken Cantrick
The Abyssal Dragon Prince probably won't stick around long enough for the PCs to come face-to-face with him. He teleports out just as they arrive. See his stats in Appendix A (Major NPCs) on Page 96.

SOME NOTES ON THE STING OF DEATH'S CULT-SYMBOL

The image above is the symbol that Death's Sting has used since the Dark Ages. The huge banners that Ken Cantrick hangs behind his pulpit on ceremonial occasions (see Page 29), the interior walls of Lucian Tarcu's castle (see Page 115) and any other important ritual regalia will have this image painted, embroidered or embossed on it. However, as you can see the symbol is big and complicated. It's difficult to reproduce on every last cultist's robe or the haft of every ceremonial dagger, so both major branches of the cult use simplified versions, depicted below, for less important ritual items, the robes of lower–ranking cultists, cult graffiti tags, etc.

VERISON USED BY KEN CANTRICK'S AMERICAN WING OF THE CULT

A lot of Cantrick's minions have this version tattooed on their bodies somewhere, although Ken himself has the full, detailed version across his back.



VERISON USED BY THE CULT'S EUROPEAN WING

Any Romanian member of the cult will wear a pin bearing this image on their lapel.

CHAPTER TWO: THE TAKING

Unless the heroes talk him out of it, Barry Robinson goes to the bank the next day and removes the *Liber Malerudorum* from his safety deposit box. One of Cantrick's minions is watching the bank, and phones him if the package has been obtained. If the heroes are acting as Robinson's bodyguards, there's a chance they notice the cultist is watching them (DC equal to the minion's Stealth check) but if they catch him, he clams up just like the others. In any case he doesn't know what the Abyssal Dragon Prince is planning. Use whichever individual cultist makes the most sense—Tom Nording (see Page 42) might be a good choice, as would "Weird Lenny" (see Page 37).

What happens next depends on whether or not Robinson has the book in his possession, and on whether the PCs are guarding his condominium.

Worst-Case Scenario: Robinson has the book, and the heroes aren't keeping an eye on him. In this case, Cantrick leads another group of thugs to the condo, breaks in, and has his minions beat Robinson until he gives up the book. Then, depending on how dark you want this adventure to be, they either leave quickly or take the time to kill Robinson and both of his daughters.

This is a very bad situation, and it is quite possible that the heroes will be left without any clues or leads, particularly if they don't yet know the location of the cult's stronghold. In this situation, the GM should feel free to help the PCs out a little: a witness comes forward to mention that one of the cultists used the expression "the Sting of Death", then an internet search on the phrase turns up a cult-watcher group's website on the reformed Church, which tells where their headquarters is located. Proceed to Chapter Three.

Not Much Better: Robinson doesn't have the book, but the heroes aren't watching over him. Cantrick waits until an opportunity presents itself. This happens when Christine, Robinson's 13-year old daughter, steps out to get some ice cream. The cultists grab her and start driving, heading for their ranch. Cantrick phones Robinson (using a disposable cell phone) to tell him that if he wants his daughter back, he should bring the book to a remote location (choose one in your campaign's city) and leave it there. Robinson panics, and does what he's told, including not contacting the police. After getting the book, Cantrick phones again to tell him either that Christine is at the Ranch (the cult has served its purpose, but focusing the attention of the heroes and the

police on that location might help him make his getaway) or that she was killed right after Barry agreed to give them the book. The latter is only appropriate for a very dark campaign.

After any rescue attempt has been made (see Chapter 3 for details) the heroes have no more leads. If the GM wants to give the Player Characters a helping hand, then one of the cultists finally breaks his silence, and reveals that he has figured out why the Abyssal Dragon Prince wants the book and that Death's Sting (the figure that the cult worships) is coming back. This will probably lead the heroes to Romania, and Chapter 4. Of course, by the time they have all the information they need, it may be too late...

Improved Odds: In either of the previous two situations, if the heroes are keeping an eye on the Robinsons, they might be doing so subtly (perhaps watching the building from across the street, or using invisibility or remote viewing, or just being present in their secret identities or in civilian clothes.) If so, then Cantrick will take the same steps as described above, but the heroes can and should intervene to stop him.

When the PCs show themselves, Cantrick will attempt to flee by teleportation again, but the heroes may be ready with counter-measures. If so, then he will stand and fight, hoping to inflict as much damage as possible. If captured, Cantrick refuses to talk, but the affair convinces Robinson that something serious is definitely happening. He starts to study the *Liber Malerudorum* very carefully.

Unless the heroes are particularly keen to finish off the Reformed Church, possibly suspecting (incorrectly) that Cantrick isn't the only magic-using member of the religion, you can skip ahead to Chapter 4 ("The Road to Transylvania"—see Page 49).

Better or Worse: If the heroes aren't being subtle in their guardianship, then regardless of whether or not Robinson has the book, Cantrick won't try anything until they leave. It's possible that he might try to create a distraction that will draw them away, in which case he'll try to kidnap one of Barry's girls and demand the book in exchange for her life.

Remember that Ken Cantrick only knows that Death's Sting will return "soon". His actions are not as desperate as they might be if he knew just how soon. He thinks he has more time than he does.

Adjusting the Challenge for Your PCs

Ken Cantrick and his pack of misfits might not be enough challenge for a group of PL 10 superheroes by themselves. There are a number of ways that you can spice things up if you think it would bore your PCs to beat the stuffing out of them.

Have Ken summon a demon or two (see the stats for two of them on Pages 44-45) and let it go rampaging around the neighborhood, slaughtering innocent people, drawing at least some of the PCs away when it's time for him to strike. Or he can have one of his minions put on an exploding suicide vest (Damage 8, 15 foot blast radius) and go cause a loud, messy hostage scene in a public place a few blocks away. Then equip the cultists who assist Ken in the raid with suicide vests of their own and have them threaten to use them while they're standing next to the Robinsons.

Barry Robinson
PL: 3

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: +0 **Attack Bonus**: +2
Defense: +2 **Toughness Save:** 2
Fortitude Save: 2 **Reflexes Save:** 0
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Concentration 4(+7), Diplomacy 4 (+4), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 4 (+8), Knowledge (History) 4 (+8), Knowledge (Philosophy and Theology) 4 (+8), Languages 4 (French, German, Greek and Latin), Notice 4 (+7), Profession (Scholar) 5 (+8), Sense Motive 2 (+5)
Feats: Skill Mastery (All three of Knowledge skills and his Profession), Well-Informed
Complications: Devoted dad. Would do anything to help or protect his children.

Background: Robinson is about six feet tall, and somewhat overweight for his height. His hair and beard are both light brown, and his eyes are just a bit darker. He smiles a lot, if only because he finds the world to be a very amusing (if often confusing) place.

From his earliest years, Robinson has always been fascinated by magic and the occult. A series of inheritances from wealthy relatives have left him free to pursue this interest, and he supplements his income with fees for lectures and the occasional article in scholarly journals. While he is aware that there really is magic in the world, he approaches his studies from a philosophical or psychological viewpoint; in other words, he is learning about what people believe rather than an objective reality.

His discovery of the "truth" in the *Liber Malerudorum* causes him to panic, as he begins to realize that much of what he has always viewed as harmless may actually be incredibly dangerous. If he survives and the heroes overcome Death's Sting, he will probably calm down, and may serve as a useful "expert" that the heroes can consult on future occult matters.

Tactics: Robinson has no combat training, and he knows it. If attacked, he will try to escape, unless his daughters are in danger. In that case, he will attack anyone threatening them–desperately, without hope or fear for himself.

Christine Robinson
PL: 0

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 14 (+2) **Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: +1 **Attack Bonus**: +0
Defense: +0 **Toughness Save:** 0
Fortitude Save: 2 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: -1

Skills: Bluff 1 (+3), Diplomacy 2 (+4), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+3), Sense Motive 2 (+1), Stealth 2 (+3)

Background: Barry Robinson's oldest daughter, Christine is a carefree, happy girl, not particularly mature for her age. Some girls in her class are already dating, but she's still more interested in Barbies and Harry Potter. Good natured but sometimes thoughtless, an A student in average classes, a little too shy to be one of the most popular kids, but too charming and pretty to be a dweeb, she has absolutely idea what she wants to be when she grows up. She is, of course, blonde. If she gets kidnapped, Christine will not have the strength or resources to escape on her own. She is a prime candidate for brainwashing, if it occurs to Ken Cantrick to try this.

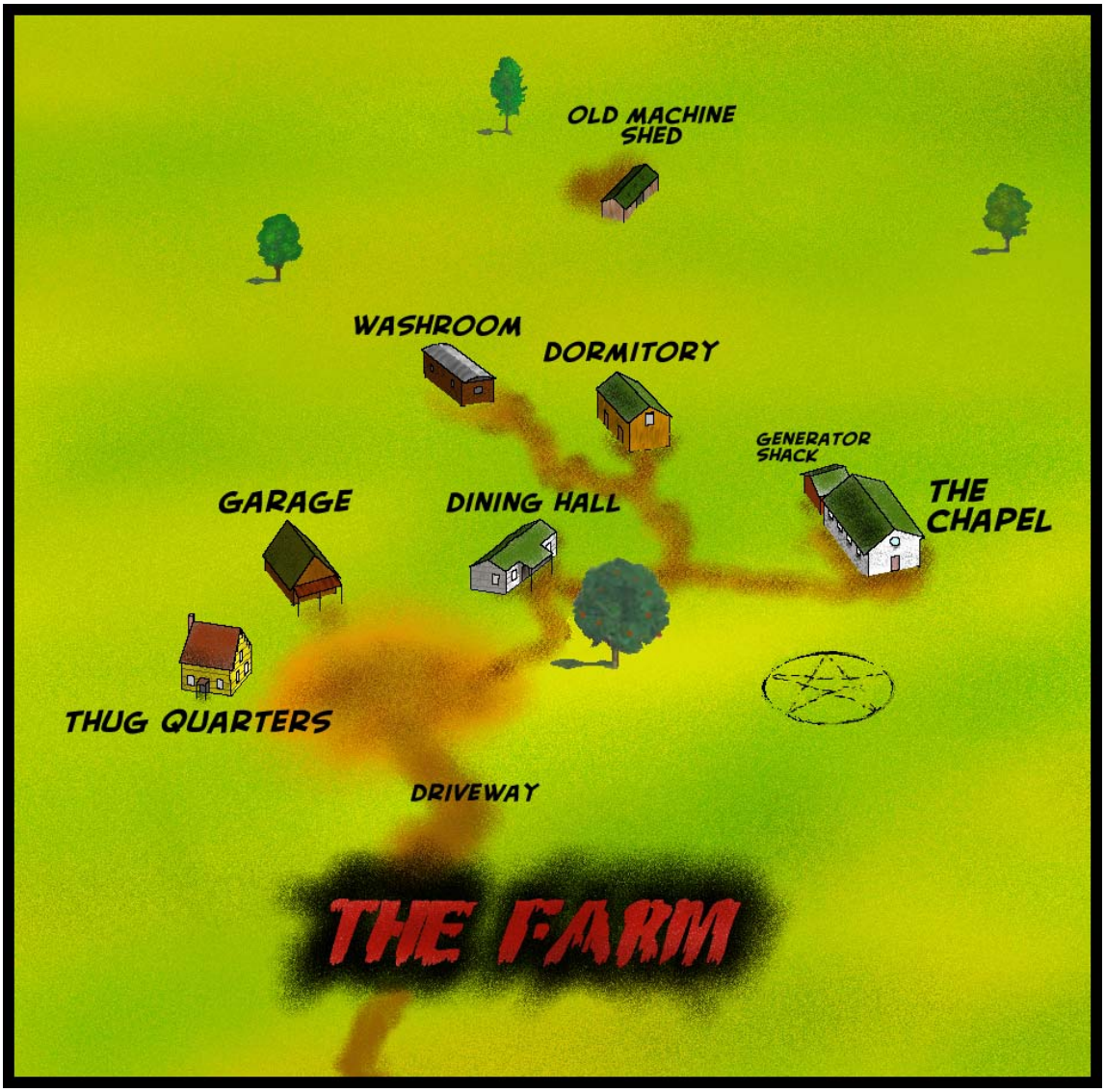
Jennifer Robinson
PL: 1

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 14 (+2) **Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: +1 **Attack Bonus**: +1
Defense: +1 **Toughness Save:** 1
Fortitude Save: 2 **Reflexes Save:** 3
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Bluff 3 (+5), Concentration 4(+5), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+5), Languages 1 (Spanish), Notice 4 (+5), Sense Motive 2 (+3), Stealth 4 (+5)

Background: Smarter and tougher than her big sister, ten-year-old Jenny is a serious, quiet girl who says that she wants to be a goth when she gets to Junior High School. She has already discovered deadpan irony, although her father has yet to figure this out. Already as fascinated by the occult as her dad, she has begun to sneak a look into his books from time to time. She loves her father and her flighty big sister and would do anything to help the PCs protect them. Jenny is unlikely to play much of a direct role in this story—we've included her largely in case Ken Cantrick needs a second hostage, or the PCs need someone to talk to about Christine who understands her better than her clueless, absent-minded dad. The GM may want to keep careful track of the way the PCs interact with Jenny (if they meet her at all). If she lives through this adventure, then in the years to come she is going to grow into a powerful sorceress (PL 10 or more) and whether she becomes a force for good or evil is going to have a lot to do with whether the PCs were able to save her sister.

CHAPTER THREE:
MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH



Situated on a square lot, the farm is completely fenced off with large “No Trespassing” signs posted every few feet. A dirt road leads through the single gate on the southern side of the square to the cluster of buildings in the northwest corner.

Ken Cantrick doesn’t care about his followers at all, and has made only the most slapdash effort to provide for their needs.

Everything on the farm has been cheaply assembled and poorly maintained by people who don’t know what they’re

doing. Paint is peeling, screen doors need patching, mold spreads across the ceilings. Their vehicles are all in need of new paint and tune-ups.

Marla Graves, Ken's second in command (see her description on Page 33), has a lot of experience in running cults, but she's much better at people management than she is at facilities management.

The Grounds: The grass is badly overgrown. In places it's ankle deep, in other places it's higher than a man's knee and in spots it has died off altogether, leaving bare brown patches of dirt. A fairly good-sized rattlesnake is lurking on the property somewhere, eating mice in the long grass. The cultists don't know about him yet, and whether or not the PCs suddenly stumble across him is entirely up to the GM.

Mystically sensitive characters will be able to sense that a lot of bad weird magic has been performed here on the farm. It has only just begun to taint the soil and make the local animals go insane. The vegetation still looks normal, although the grass is unnaturally lush and blemished and the farm's one apple tree gives large, pale fruit covered with ugly black marks, which taste too sweet and will give you cancer if you eat very many of them (this is unlikely to come up in the course of the game so we leave it to the GM to work out the game mechanics for the carcinogenic apples). There are a lot of flies and some unusually aggressive hornets buzzing around the farm buildings. Other animal sounds are oddly absent or distorted. No crickets chirp here at night. Sometimes you can hear a groundhog or a raccoon scream in psychotic agony, off in the distance somewhere. A rabbit may come streaking through the grass, spattered with blood, shrieking and biting at itself in a mad frenzy. The cultists have learned better than to try to keep dogs here, let alone bigger livestock.

Near the chapel is a spot where someone tried to burn a fifty-foot pentagram into the ground. Grass and weeds are growing back in over the design, but they're growing in all distorted and wrong.

Dormitory: This long, narrow building contains two rows of fifteen bunk beds each, with two doors on the front. The left one is for going in and the right one is for going out—Marla Graves claims that there is some kind of occult significance to this, but it's really just to exert more control over the cult's followers. All of the cultists sleep here, and most of them can be found here when they aren't eating, attending worship services, or "meditating". Cantrick, of course, sleeps elsewhere in considerably more comfort.

If you would like to give your Players a minor scare, have them make a Notice roll (DC 15) when they approach the dormitory's cracked and peeling wooden doors. If they succeed, they spy something small and yellow lying in the grass. It's a human tooth.

Dining Hall: This building (with a kitchen in the back) seats twenty at a set of Formica tables that look like they've come out of a church basement or a junior high school social function. The cultists eat in fifteen minute shifts. Talking is forbidden.

A twisted, ratty-looking apple tree grows near the back door. It bears huge and blemished fruit that looks diseased and tastes much too sweet. The cultists avoid eating the apples from this tree even if they're hungry. If asked why, they say "look at the squirrel."

A squirrel does in fact make his home in this tree. Huge cancerous growths dangle from his tiny body and he moves as though in pain.

Generator Shack: This small building sits behind the chapel. It contains a large generator and several barrels of fuel oil (empty barrels are taken over to the old machine shed and left there—see Page 30 for the reason why). The farm gets power through the local grid. The generator is here in case of emergencies, and hasn't been used in months.

Washroom: This building houses five chemical toilets and five shower stalls. Like most of the farm's facilities, it looks flimsy, poorly maintained and none too clean. It wasn't assembled by professionals and the roof leaks. Cleaning the washroom is a punishment detail, so no one tries very hard when they're assigned to it. The results show. At least one of the chemical toilets is always out of service and the smell of mildew in the showers at least partly manages to mask the even worse odors coming from the latrines.

Garage: The cult's two vans are parked here in this barn, which has been converted into a mechanic's shop. It's possible that the rental car (see Chapter One, Page 14) is here as well. If so, it will be in the process of getting stripped down to its chassis.

The garage also doubles as the armory. All the cult's guns are kept locked up in cabinets here. They have eleven pump-action shotguns and as many light pistols as you care to give them (there should be about five per Player Character, allowing the GM to have that many armed cultists per PC when they attack the ranch). Only Cantrick and his most trusted lieutenant, Marla Graves, (who always stays behind when Cantrick leaves the ranch) have the keys to unlock the gun cabinets.

Thug Quarters: Formerly the ranch's farmhouse, this tiny cottage is presently the home for all the cult's leaders and enforcers, except for Ken Cantrick himself. Overcrowded, it's anything but luxurious, but it's still better than the Dormitory. It does not have indoor plumbing. The cult's leaders use the washroom building, just like everyone else.

Chapel: This is the largest building on the grounds. Nearly eighty people can be seated at once in front of the pulpit from which Cantrick delivers his "sermons". It used to be a storage barn for hay-bales and it's not really meant for human habitation. The walls are made of cinderblock and the windows are set so close to the top that you can't see out of them from the inside—they just let in outdoor light. It's a stark-looking room, with metal benches that look as though they have been salvaged from bus stops. The pulpit is made of concrete. Huge red banners covered with occult symbols hang behind the pulpit. Apart from this, the walls are completely unadorned. There are ugly fluorescent light fixtures poking straight out of the blocks. There is a loud echo in the chapel, and when Ken Cantrick is preaching at full volume and his followers start chanting with him at the top of their lungs, it can get downright deafening. Despite the bare walls and the lack of air conditioning, the temperature in here always seems to be about the same—just cold enough to be slightly uncomfortable. An odd smell hangs over the place—sort of a mixture of ozone and burnt plastic. Any Player Character who makes a Knowledge (Arcane Lore) check vs. DC 15 recognizes it as the lingering reek of black magic.

Behind the pulpit is a staircase that leads down to Ken Cantrick's personal quarters. The door at the bottom of the stairs is always locked, but it doesn't really need to be—no one from the cult would ever dare go down here.

Ken Cantrick's Room

Ken Cantrick lives better than his followers, but his quarters are still pretty Spartan. He lives in a single long narrow room, under the chapel. It has no windows. There are no pictures on the walls. The floor is concrete, with rugs scattered across it. A small refrigerator holds his personal food. He views food as fuel and has inexpensive tastes. Precooked hamburger patties and bottles of tomato juice occupy most of the fridge. He doesn't even have any ketchup or mustard, let alone any buns.

His futon-bed rests in one corner. The coverlet has an expensive, lurid and unbelievably tacky picture of the cult's symbol airbrushed onto it. His laptop sits on one edge of the futon. This is his only computer—he has a really good wireless internet connection and he browses the web a lot, looking for information on rival occult groups and on really unpleasant videogames. There is no clothes closet—he keeps his garments in carefully folded stacks by the edge of his bed. A toilet stands next to his futon, exposed to the rest of the room. There is a shower stall in the corner opposite it. A black metal bookshelf full of occult volumes and Cantrick's personal notebooks stands against one wall. There is an intricate occult design covering part of the exposed concrete floor. It looks as though it was set into the cement while it was still soft. A metal chair is bolted into the floor next to it. The chair has eyehooks set into its back and legs that are clearly meant to hold ropes or chains. Cantrick's one real vice (apart from murder and black magic) is videogames. A large flat-screen TV hangs on the wall across from his bed, and in a metal cabinet underneath it are five separate videogame systems and a collection of the most amoral, vicious games on the market. If Cantrick has the *Liber Malerudorum*, he will be in his room studying it. If he has taken a prisoner, she will be down here, bound and gagged in the metal chair. Since Cantrick's room is completely off limits to the cultists, the hostage has been left completely alone.

Old Machine Shed: Off to one side of the complex, this tumbledown old building once housed a tractor, spare plows and other pieces of farm machinery. Now it's deserted and packed with junk. It is difficult to move around inside the shed with all the bits of broken lumber, rotten fenceposts and rusting scraps of corrugated iron sheeting. At one point Ken Cantrick had plans to put a ten-foot chain link fence around the property and the unused rolls of fencing lie here as well. An inventive Player Character looking for an improvised weapon could find plenty of blunt or pointy objects in here, covered with grime. A Notice check vs. DC 10 allows you to find a heavy or jagged piece of debris that will serve as a club or spear, doing up to 3 damage at the GM's discretion. Someone with super-strength could find an object that does up to 5 with a Notice check vs. DC 12. A faint, unwholesome smell, like a dead animal, hangs over the building. It's not strong, but it's always there. There is a row of rusty oil drums standing to one side of the shed. Dirty circles on the ground show that there used to be at least seven more barrels.

The cultists are all instructed to avoid this building. Ostensibly this is because it is dirty and dangerous and might harbor venomous spiders. While this is certainly true, the real reason the cult's leaders keep people away is the small graveyard out behind the building. This is where Ken Cantrick's enemies go, as well as people who've annoyed Marla Graves.

Graveyard: Behind the Old Machine Shed is a plot of bare earth, where the remains of seven human beings lie buried in two neat little rows. There is room for plenty more. Each grave is about four feet deep and each corpse is sealed inside an oil drum with a lot of quicklime to keep them from stinking too badly. Yet nothing can completely mask the odor. A faint smell like a dead animal always hangs over this spot, and it gets worse after it rains. The graves are visible with a Notice check vs. DC 15, as faint depressions in the ground, about six feet in length and three feet wide.

This shabby little burial ground is the cult's biggest secret. If the authorities ever find out about it, everyone here could go to prison for life. Most cult members don't know it exists, and no one ever speaks of it directly, although the term "go out behind the machine shed" has become a euphemism for "kill" among the cult's leaders. If the PCs find this place after Ken Cantrick has kidnapped Christine Robinson, there is a fresh pit, six feet long by three feet wide by five feet deep, open at the end of the second row. An empty oil drum stands beside it, as though waiting.

What's it Like on the Ranch?

Marla Graves is Ken Cantrick's second in command and she runs most of the ranch's mundane, daily activities. See her individual description on Page 33. Most rank-and-file cult members see Ken Cantrick only when he delivers his daily sermons, although he sometimes appears without warning and pulls individual members of the cult aside for intense one-on-one meditational encounters (several hours of browbeating and inappropriate personal questions). The individual counseling and study sessions are usually led by the charismatic Arnold Spangler, a former self-help guru and minor television personality, who is an expert at comforting and entrancing lost and desperate people. Mr. Spangler will actually impersonate Ken Cantrick in any confrontation with the authorities (see page 14).

An elite group of five enforcers patrol the grounds with shotguns and maintain discipline. We have individual descriptions and back-stories for them on Pages 36-40. They get better food, shorter working hours and the pleasure of lording it over other cult members. There is no formal name for this inner cadre of thugs, but they get to wear scary looking robes and pointy cowls on ceremonial occasions. They can be brutal with cultists who break the rules, but they don't kill people casually—there aren't enough cultists to just throw them away.

Anyone who attempts to sneak onto the farm will have to deal with the sentries (the elite thugs) who walk regular patrols at all hours. It is very unlikely that even the most quick-talking hero can convince any of them that they are new converts, even if they dress the part, as they know every cultist's face by sight (+10 to Sense Motive in opposing this Bluff, unless the hero is Disguised or Morphed to resemble someone they recognize.)

THE DAILY ROUTINE

Life on the ranch is highly regimented. Each day is like the next—there are no changes or variations in the routine for weekends or holidays. This helps keep the acolytes exhausted and breaks down their sense of time.

7:00 AM-8:00 AM	Everyone wakes up and heads for the dining hall. The first twenty to arrive get the first fifteen-minute meal shift, then the next twenty, and so on. If you're not eating, you should be showering or meditating.
8:00 AM-9:00 AM	Morning services. If the Abyssal Dragon Prince is present, he will deliver the sermon in his full regalia, which makes him look a bit like a certain purple dinosaur. Otherwise, one of his lieutenants speaks (usually Arnold Spangler). The theme is always the same: the modern world is unalterably corrupt, and when Death's Sting returns it will be swept away by frenzied, glorious anarchy.
9:00 AM-Noon	"Free time". In other words, meditate unless you're assigned other duties.
Noon-1:00 AM	Lunch is served, in the same manner as breakfast.
1:00 PM-4:00 PM	More "free time".
4:00 PM-5:00 PM	Afternoon services. These sermons usually focus on how wonderful life will be for the Chosen of Death's Sting in the Age of Blood to come.
5:00 PM-6:00 PM	Super is served, just like breakfast and lunch.
6:00 PM-9:00 PM	More "free time". Often, individual cultists will be taken aside and subjected to brain-washing techniques.
9:00 PM-7:00 AM	Lights out. Everyone not on guard duty is in bed. However, there is always one (and sometimes there are two or three) "emergency preparation drills" held during the night, where everyone is forced to march out in front of the chapel to be ready to defend it. This is actually to ensure that no one gets enough sleep.

The Attack on the Farm

If Ken Cantrick or his deputies realize that the heroes know about the ranch, they will immediately have the cultists arm themselves. They pass out weapons to every rank-and-file cultist they can trust. When the heroes make their assault, they will immediately face five armed cultists for every hero in the group, plus five elite thugs. The elite thugs and six of the regulars are equipped with shotguns, and everyone else has a light pistol. They will fight to the bitter end. In addition to the armed zealots, a large number of cultists are just bystanders, who aren't trusted with weapons. There is a fifty-fifty chance that any given bystander will attack an intruder if the alarm has been raised; otherwise, they'll flee.

At the end of this chapter we have stats for both generic cultists and a number of individual personalities you can add to the mix if you want to individualize them (see Pages 33-45). You're not obligated to use any of the characters and back-stories provided—they're strictly there if you need them.

GM's Option: Calling in the Cops

Depending on how much the characters worked with the authorities, the State Troopers may or may not send a SWAT team with the PCs. We have stats for the team and their commander at the end of this chapter (Pages 46 to 47). It's strictly up to the GM as to whether or not this would change the "flavor" of the scene too much, or add too many complications to the battle. If the PCs do have a tactical unit of heavily armed cops at their back, you should still let them act independently, rather than having the SWAT team commander order them around. That's why we've made him the kind of guy who would let the PCs operate on their own. The Player Characters' actions should always be central to the story.

By the same token, the PCs probably shouldn't be able to tell the cops precisely what to do. They can certainly suggest a plan of action to Lieutenant Baedecker, and if it sounds like a good one he'll eagerly try to follow it, but he's not obligated to go along with a plan he doesn't like. Nor will he automatically look to the PCs for guidance—he's just willing to listen if they have any ideas. He will certainly want to know the PCs' plan of attack, so that he can try to avoid a "friendly fire" incident, but if they refuse to tell him, he'll shrug it off and decide that he doesn't need to care if they don't. Maybe they're bulletproof or something. The Lieutenant is dangerously casual about safety and the PCs may have to watch their backs if they deviate from whatever plan they've told him, or even if they don't.

Adjusting the Challenge for Your PCs

The assault on the farm has the potential to turn into a truly colossal hostage situation. If you're worried that the scene will be a cakewalk for the PCs, then Marla Graves comes on over the PA system and starts instructing the cultists to assemble in the Dormitory for "the Emergency Exit Plan." By which she clearly means the mass-murder/suicide plan. Some of the cult thugs will be standing guard over the whimpering rank-and file cultists in the dormitory, ready to open fire on them with their shotguns, and some of the fanatics in the group will have already donned their suicide vests (Damage 8, 15 foot Burst Radius). If the PCs simply, absolutely need a PL 10 villain or two to beat on, then Ken has summoned one or both of the demons on Pages 44-45 and they confront the PCs just as they start to think this is going to be easy. We also have a PL 9 version of his lieutenant, Marla Graves, with some magical powers, on Page 34 if you need another supervillain.

As an additional option, it is possible that even if the Player Characters haven't shared their plans with the authorities, the State Police attack the farm at the very moment the PCs do, complicating the assault and creating a lot of crossfire. Perhaps in real life that would be improbable, but not in the comics! In the confusion of the battle, Lieutenant Baedecker may or may not decide to have his men hold their fire against the PCs.

The SWAT team might or might not be able to injure the PCs but they are sure to alert the cult that an assault is in progress and they may need rescuing themselves. To give a *really* large or tough group of PCs a challenge, throw every trick at them at once. The cultists start a sucide/hostage maneuver at the same moment as the demons appear, which is also the same moment that the cops start shooting everybody.

Generic Cultist
PL: 2

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 2
Defense: 2 (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Drive 2 (+2), Intimidate 4 (+3), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+2), Notice +2 (+2), Profession (Whatever they did before they joined the cult) 4 (+5), Stealth 4 (+4)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 points worth), Sneak Attack
Equipment: Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Light-Caliber Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)

Generic Cult Thug
PL: 4

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 4
Defense: 4 (+4 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Bluff 3 (+4), Intimidate 7 (+8), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+1), Notice 4 (+6), Profession (whatever the cultist used to do before joining the organization) 4 (+4), Search 4 (+4), Stealth 4 (+5)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 pts worth), Fearless, Move-By Action
Equipment: Binoculars (Super-Senses: Telescopic Vision), Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Night-Vision Goggles, (Super-Senses: Low-Light Vision), Shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage)
Complications: Crazy, deluded fanatic, willing to die for the Abyssal Dragon Prince.
Background: One of the church's enforcers. These unpleasant people are charged with protecting the farm from outsiders and with internal discipline. They are given the best food, the most leisure time and authority over their fellow cultists. In exchange, they are expected to kill or die for the cult's leadership. For most of them, the trade-off is more than worth it.

Some of the enforcers are mad zealots, but most of them just love getting to push other people around. Some don't believe in the occult at all. Most of them are men, but there are one or two girls in their ranks. Only a few of the enforcers have any military or police training, apart from what they've received at the farm. Nonetheless, they are all naturally aggressive and spend a lot of time practicing marksmanship, which makes them more formidable than you might expect. They patrol the farm's perimeter in street clothes, but for ceremonial occasions they put on scary-looking robes with conical hoods that cover their faces. If there is a full-scale assault on the farm, they will don their robes and hoods before they go into combat, turning them into a faceless horde of masked killers. We have detailed some individual goons below, under the section "Some Sample Cultists" in case you need to individualize them a little more.

Some Sample Cultists
We don't really have space to give each of the farm's residents a detailed back-story of their own, but if you'd like to make them something more than a faceless mass of aggressors and/or hostages, here are a few individual personalities you can sprinkle into the mix. If the PCs attempt to infiltrate the group then they should get to meet at least one or two of these people.

Cult Leadership
Ken Cantrick leaves most of the day-to day operations of the farm in the hands of his most trusted lieutenant, Marla Graves, while recruitment and public relations are largely left up to the less-reliable Arnold Spangler. Neither one of them ever leaves the farm.

Marla Graves

Real Name: Jane Flaxbart
PL: 7

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2) **Int:** 16 (+3) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 18 (+4) **Initiative:** 3 **Attack Bonus**: 7 **Defense:** 7 (+ 3 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 6 (2 flatfooted), **Fortitude Save:** 6 **Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 4 (7 vs. mental attacks with Mind Shield)

Skills: Bluff 8 (+12), Concentration 4 (+8), Diplomacy 6 (+10), Escape Artist 3 (+5), Intimidate 8 (+12), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 3 (+6), Knowledge (Streetwise) 2 (+5), Medicine 2 (+5), Notice 8 (+12), Profession (Cult Leader) 9 (+12), Performance (Oratory) 6 (+10), Profession (Model) 2 (+5), Search 6 (+10), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Sleight of Hand 3 (+6), Stealth 6 (+9), Survival 1 (+5)
Feats: Attractive, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 4, Fascinate, Fearless, Inspire, Leadership, Sneak Attack, Startle, Taunt
Powers: Force Field 7 (Note: Her maximum Toughness Save is still 7; Extra: Impervious; Flaw: Works only vs. Magical attacks), Mind Shield 7 (Maximum Willpower Saving Throw is still 7), Nullify Magic Powers (Extra: Nullification Field)

Background: Ken Cantrick's second in command, she is a smart, capable, charismatic leader, far better organized than her boss. She is normally left in charge of the farm when he is away, and she runs things with ruthless efficiency.

Marla is an old hand at this. She has served under one cult leader or another since the early 1970s. She has been a part of Satanist groups and Christian groups and Wiccan groups. She has lived on anarcho-syndicalist communes and New Age retreats and quite a few white supremacist compounds The life suits her, and it keeps her hidden from the authorities, who would otherwise have sent her to prison a long, long time ago.

Marla's real name is Jane Flaxbart, but she hasn't used it in so many years that it's hard for her to even remember it anymore. Where did she come from? The dust, she jokes. Where is she going? The grave. In fact she's an ex-model from a small town in Texas, who went to Los Angeles and got involved first with the drug scene and then with the occult. You can still see her smiling teenaged face in the yellowing pages of a number of old catalogues. She even appeared briefly as a backup singer in a famously mellow surf-band.

But of course her background is almost irrelevant now. Her parents are long dead and no one else in her family has seen her for thirty years. Totally forgotten, she might as well have come out of the dust, like she says. There may be a few old friends from high school or college who might remember her (she has a dazzling personality and is hard to forget) but she has never encountered any of them.

Marla is somewhere past fifty, but she still looks beautiful and strangely ageless (although if you look close at her deeply tanned skin you can see that it is covered with a fine network of wrinkles). Her hair is streaked with white and hangs to her waist. It's always been her best feature and she knows how to toss it for dramatic effect when she speaks. She has a lot of scary looking occult tattoos, but her clothes hide most of them. Marla smiles constantly,

even when she is angry. She always looks peaceful, confident and calm, no matter what situation she finds herself in. She doesn't experience fear or shame and remains eerily upbeat and charming even under horrendous circumstances. Completely amoral, she does not really believe in anything, but has seen enough of the occult over the years to respect its power. Not a full-fledged sorceress (despite having impersonated one on many occasions) she knows a lot of counter-spells and psychic self-defense techniques. Some potent countercharms are woven into her tattoos.

While Marla indulges on occasion, she does not have and has never had a drug problem, despite having hung out with a seriously doped-up crowd in the early '70s. She gets her kicks off other, worse vices and she's always been more destructive than self-destructive.

Marla is a sadist, but a careful, cautious one. She loves violence, but she loves power even more. If she kills or tortures people wantonly, she'll get caught or killed and then she won't have power over anyone any more. She has killed a lot of different people in a lot of different ways for a lot of different reasons, but she has never done it impulsively.

If the farm gets surrounded by the authorities she will fight to the death and try to encourage as many cultists as possible to do the same. If she gets caught, they'll surely execute her and she figures it's better to go out in a blaze of glory.

GM's Option: What if She's Tougher?
If you feel the ranch doesn't offer enough of a challenge, then make Marla a full-fledged PL 9 sorceress. Her Attack bonus is now 10 and her Defense is 8. She has a Toughness 9 Force Field that no longer has the Flaw "Only works vs. magical attacks", Illusion 9 (Flaw: Phantasms), Immunity 1 (to the effects of "Intimidate" rolls), Mind Control 9 (Extra: Conscious), Nauseate 9, Super-Senses (Darkvision and Detect Magic), and Telepathy 9.

Arnold Spangler

PL: 6

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 4 (+4 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1
Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Bluff 7 (+11), Diplomacy 7 (+11), Intimidate 7 (+11), Notice 4 (+4), Perform (Oratory) 7 (+11), Profession (salesman) 8 (+10), Sense Motive 9 (+9)
Feats: All-Out Attack, Chokehold, Fascinate, Improved Initiative, Inspire, Rage +2, Skill

Mastery (Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate and Perform), Sneak Attack, Startle, Taunt
Complications: Lacks self-restraint, vain.
Background: A former self-help guru, Arnold considers himself a spiritual salesman. He has sold people on biofeedback and transcendental meditation and Jesus and the healing power of magnets and countless other creeds, doctrines and fad diets. Selling things has always come naturally to him and he has many years of practice at it. A Communications major in college, he intended to be either an actor or a TV weatherman, and while he has done both of these things on occasion, he found his real calling as a vendor of spiritual bliss.

He has a commanding voice and a fatherly smile. He also has some awful secret vices that have always held his career back. By the time Ken Cantrick hired him as a PR flack and front man, he was getting desperate and feeling his age. Hounded by lawsuits and ex-wives, gaining weight and losing his boyish good looks, he was willing to find any port in the storm. Ken saw him on a late night infomercial and though he looked both talented and desperately unhappy enough to hire. He was right on both counts.

Arnold is about fifty-five. He's had too many facelifts and it shows—his skin has an oddly tight, plastic look. He dyes his receding hair a rich and glossy black and hides his spreading gut with a girdle. There are warrants out for his arrest in New Mexico (unpaid child support) Nevada (fraud), Georgia (fraud, unpaid child support and reckless endangerment), and Missouri (drunk driving, unpaid child support, fraud) and process servers from a half dozen more states are hunting him with lawsuits in hand.

The Reformed Church of Death's Sting is not the first homicidal cult he's been a part of, but it is the first one that has had real supernatural power at its disposal. This discovery has humbled and terrified him. He's felt afraid almost constantly since joining up with Ken, but he fears the wrath of his ex-wives and swindled investors even more, so he remains in the cult's fold. He's much too scared of Ken Cantrick to ever betray him, even with his dying breath. Arnold is sure that Ken can find him and punish him on the other side of death (and he's right). If he thinks Ken is watching, he will be willing to grit his teeth and die for the cult, since the alternative would surely be worse. In fact Ken would never ask that of Arnold, he's too good a spokesman and recruiter to just throw away. If Ken thinks he has any chance of escaping the assault on the farm, he'll want Arnold to come with him. Unless of course there's only room for one of them to get away, in which case he'll cheerfully betray the old fraud.

Although he's a large man, Arnold doesn't look like much of a fighter—he's too suave and well-groomed. This is deceptive. On the very few occasions when he has been so desperate that he's had to use physical violence to escape a creditor or silence a witness, he has always behaved with vicious, desperate savagery. Arnold fights like a cornered rat when his back is to the wall. He'll hit people who are down, he'll take hostages and he'll hurt them to let you know he's serious. He has killed three people over the years. An optimist, he prefers not to dwell on these crimes and instead looks to the future.

Arnold has no official leadership position, but Marla lets him lord it over the other cultists and order them around as it suits him, so long as it doesn't contradict any of her orders. He's not a cruel taskmaster, for he's much too eager to be liked. He worked with Marla before, under another name, and he knows she's bad, bad news. He's smart enough not to get her attention by letting her see his fear, but he will unquestioningly do whatever she says.

Enforcers

The cult's thugs get to live in the cramped farmhouse with Marla Graves and Arnold Spangler, which is at least better than the dormitory. Better still, they get to muscle the other cultists around, and just occasionally kill one.

We have some individual stats and personalities for this motley bunch of fanatics and sociopaths here.

Leonard Wayne Grimley
PL: 4

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 4
Defense: 4 (+4 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 2 (multiply the DC of any Mind Control attack by 1.5)

Skills: Intimidate 7 (+6), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+6), Profession (Military Prison Guard) 2 (+2), Search 4 (+4), Stealth 6 (+8)
Feats: All-Out Attack, Chokehold, Equipment 2 (10 pts worth), Fearless, Improved Aim, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Rage 2
Equipment: Binoculars (Super-Senses: Telescopic Vision), Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Night-Vision Goggles, (Super-Senses: Low-Light Vision), Shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage)
Complications: Crazy fanatic, willing to die for the Abyssal Dragon Prince, strange and inarticulate.
Drawbacks: Moderate Vulnerability to Mind-Control attacks (4pts)
Background: They used to call him "Weird Lenny" in the army, and if you meet him, you'll know why. Short and wiry, with a beaky nose and staring, distant eyes that don't point in the same direction, he looks like an alarmed bird. Quiet and odd, given to sudden nervous sidelong glances, he isn't very articulate and often says things that make no sense or have nothing to do with the topic of conversation.

He was always a misfit. He comes from an unsuccessful farming family in rural Ohio. Both of his parents were a little strange and none too bright, but he was an oddball even in their family. Always fascinated by death and flame, always obsessed with his weird inner visions and with the occult, he has spent his whole life in a quest for strange dark magic and he has finally found it.

Lenny joined the army out of economic necessity, and from a craving for savagery and blood. He was unsuitable for other work and there were in any case no jobs available in his part of the state. His parents could no longer afford to feed him, so into the army he went. He has never bothered to contact his family and isn't aware that his mother died four years ago.

The regimented, structured life of an enlisted man was just what Lenny needed to stay sane and out of trouble. Although he was quiet and strange, and still spent much of the time wrapped up in weird, violent fantasies, he was a competent enough soldier to get by. He became a military policeman and was assigned to help guard supervillains at a secret facility somewhere in the northwest. His cruelty and odd behavior would have gotten him kicked out of the program eventually, but fate had other plans. He got into some long, strange conversations with one of the prisoners (a mystic supervillain—choose a really ominous one from your campaign) and was later instrumental in helping him escape. Nothing was ever proved against Lenny, but he was dishonorably discharged and soon found himself in the service of the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death. He has actually learned a little magic here and there and will use it if he's confronted by superheroes.

Weird Lenny is a passable shot, and very adept at using a club. He believes in Death's Sting and Ken Cantrick with a burning, lunatic zeal and he will do anything to serve their goal.

He's strange and passive enough that he needs a lot of structure and is unlikely to think of any innovative tactics, but he will follow instructions to the letter. He has no thought for his own well-being or anyone else's.

Willa Karkes
PL: 4

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus**: 4
Defense: 4 (+4 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2 **Reflexes Save:** 3 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Intimidate 5 (+8), Notice 4 (+6), Search 4 (+4), Stealth 4 (+7)

Feats: Equipment 1 (5 pts worth), Fearless, Rage 3
Equipment: Shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage)
Background: Little Willa Karkes is a live wire and a loose cannon. A tiny, scrawny woman, she has long, thin blonde hair, and a narrow, suspicious, hard-bitten face. Constantly scowling or sneering, always looking for a fight, she may be the most aggressive member of Cantrik's inner circle. Most of his elite thugs have military or police training, but little Willa is just a natural. She goes out of her way to bully the ordinary cultists and to provoke conflicts. The only time anyone sees her smile is when she catches someone breaking the rules.

She has killed twice and developed an unhealthy taste for it. She's not a competent torturer, knows little about the theory behind it, but she's an enthusiastic amateur and loves pounding the daylights out of people with the butt of her gun. She likes blunt weapons, but isn't above hurting people with knives, when she gets a chance. Long hours outdoors have put some premature lines in face—most people would never guess that she's only sixteen.

Her background is unremarkable. Abused by her stepfather from early childhood, she was always angry and violent. Her cruel behavior toward animals and smaller children landed her in juvenile detention twice and she found prison only slightly worse than being at home. She ran away with her boyfriend, Charlie, at the first opportunity. Charlie was a dimwit, a brute and a whiner as well, but he was the best thing available. The two of them escaped to Los Angeles and survived on the streets however they could until they fell in with the Reformed Church of Death' Sting. The relationship didn't last long after Willa found a secure place to eat and sleep. Charlie still pines for her and still tries to get her attention at every opportunity, much to her disgust.

Willa looks up to Marla Graves and thinks she must be a lot like Marla at her age. That isn't true. Marla had killed a lot more people by the time she was sixteen, but had never lost her temper even once.

Marla likes scrappy little Willa, is amused by her spunk and homicidal fury, but knows her limitations well, and would never entrust her with any kind of assignment where her aggression would screw things up. If the farm gets attacked and Marla doesn't see any good way to flee, she'll be sure to put Willa in whatever party gets sent to negotiate with the authorities, knowing that she won't be able to help provoking a fight.

Willa is too locked up her own private world of hatred for Ken Cantrick's philosophy to make much of an impression on her. But she'd willingly throw her life away for the cult all the same. It would impress Marla (she thinks) and anyway why not?

Charlie Fuchs
PL: 4

Str: 17 (+3)	**Dex:** 10 (+1)	**Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 8 (-1)	**Wis:** 12 (+1)	**Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 0	**Attack Bonus**: 4	
Defense: 4 (+4 Flatfooted)	**Toughness Save:** 2	**Fortitude Save:** 2
Reflexes Save: 0	**Willpower Save:** 1	

Skills: Intimidate 7 (+7), Knowledge (Streetwise) 1 (+1), Notice 3 (+2), Stealth 2 (+2)
Feats: All-Out Attack, Equipment 2 (10 pts worth)
Equipment: Binoculars (Super-Senses: Telescopic Vision), Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Night-Vision Goggles, (Super-Senses: Low-Light Vision), Shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage)
Complications: Constant whiner, incapable of gratitude.
Background: Willa's dimwit former boyfriend. He insists on calling himself "Talon" and he's one of the enforcers, so everyone has to go along with it. Talon has done little with his brief life apart from smoking dope, lifting weights and arguing with his mom. He practiced Satanism in his room until he turned eighteen and his mom threw him out of the house. Then he lived in his car. He started hanging out with Willa shortly thereafter and she became his first girlfriend. The two of them headed for LA

(by bus—his car had stopped working) and after a few terrifying months of living on the streets they found the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death. It seemed like a safe place to sleep.

He's bigger and stronger than any of the other enforcers, but he also whines more than any of them. He's always been a complainer, and is constantly grumbling about some petty annoyance or other.

Because he's huge and his voice is deep, people mistake his whining for a threatening, domineering personality. In fact he has neither the brains nor the inclination to lead anyone. Completely selfish, he lives for little creature comforts and feels no concern for anyone else but Willa. Always in a sulk about some gripe or other, he never seems to smile.

Talon hasn't yet killed anybody, but he's always wanted to, and he's looking for an excuse. He still pines for Willa, and thinks that he would die for her, although in fact he's much too chicken (as he may soon get a chance to find out).

His dedication to Satanism had more to do with liking Norwegian death metal and the way it freaked out his mom than it did with any real spiritual connection to evil. While Talon has seen real magic in his days at the farm, he's too preoccupied with grumbling about how unfair things are and trying to get Willa's attention for it to have made much of an impression him. In any serious confrontation, he will act threatening at first, and then swiftly lose his nerve the moment he gets injured.

Garth Eckys
PL: 4

Str: 16 (+3)	**Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0)	**Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 0	**Attack Bonus**: 4
Defense: 4 (+4 Flatfooted)	**Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Bluff 4 (+5), Intimidate 7 (+8), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 3 (+3), Notice 3 (+5), Search 3 (+3), Stealth 4 (+5)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 pts worth), Fearless, Taunt
Equipment: Binoculars (Super-Senses: Telescopic Vision), Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Night-Vision Goggles, (Super-Senses: Low-Light Vision), Nunchuks (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage)
Complications: Willing to die for the forces of darkness and the Abyssal Dragon Prince.
Background: The second largest and strongest of the cult's enforcers. He likes to be called "Claw" and resents the fact that Talon (Charlie Fuchs) has a similar nickname. Claw is shorter than Talon, but more solidly built. He's overweight, but strong as an ape underneath his fat. Everyone assumes that Talon and Claw are a matched set—Marla's pair of looming, giant thugs. In fact they have very different personalities and dislike each other quite a bit. They're both suburban metalheads, but they're from different parts of the country and they speak different slang. Claw thinks that Talon's shaggy beard and dreadlocks are stupid, while Talon thinks the same about Claw's mullet and scraggly moustache. They both like death metal, but they like different bands.

Where Talon is scowling, sullen and reserved, Claw is a grinning, cruel loudmouth. He likes hassling people, likes picking on ordinary cult members for little infractions of the rules, just like Talon, but he's much more verbal and less physical about his cruelty. He enjoys taunting and threatening rule-breakers more than hitting them. He has begun needling Talon in private, whenever he gets the chance, in hopes of getting the big guy to start a fight with him. He's convinced that he would win and that everyone would then acknowledge that he's tougher. Claw is more competitive than Talon and constantly trying to show off how mean he is. During the assault on the farm, he'll keep his nerve and fight to the death unless he's told to retreat.

The graduate of a number of reform schools, he has been in innumerable fights, but he's never killed anybody. When the time comes, he'll be able to do it without a flicker of remorse. While he feels that he has pledged his life to Death's Sting and is certainly willing to die for the cause, he

would have been willing to die for almost any cause—dying in the service of bold, triumphant evil is something he's always intended to do. He thinks the magic he has seen Ken Cantrick perform is pretty cool, but he's not exactly awestruck by it, since he never doubted that stuff like that was real.

In addition to his shotgun and knife, he carries a non-standard weapon—a pair of nunchuks, which he keeps as much to remind himself of his stoner roots as to hit people with.

Melvin Darnel
PL: 4

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 4
Defense: 4 (+4 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 2

Skills: Bluff 5 (+6), Drive +3 (+4), Intimidate 5 (+7), Medicine 2 (+2), Notice 4 (+4), Profession (police officer) 4 (+4), Search 4 (+4), Stealth 4 (+5)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 pts worth), Improved Grapple, Sneak Attack
Equipment: Binoculars (Super-Senses: Telescopic Vision), Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Night-Vision Goggles, (Super-Senses: Low-Light Vision), Shotgun (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage)
Complications: Lazy, cruel, enjoys hurting people and always takes the easiest way out of any situation.
Background: A deputy with the County Sheriff's office, Melvin was sent to infiltrate the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death. Marla Graves figured out that he was an undercover cop almost at once, and did her best to isolate him from the cult's secrets. But Ken Cantrick had another plan. He showed Detective Darnell what real supernatural power looked like, and he was so impressed that he switched loyalties. Now he is the cult's informant in the Sheriff's department, rather than the other way around. It came as quite a shock to Melvin Darnell to find out that the supernatural was real. He had never believed in much of anything before.

Too cruel and lazy to make a very good cop, he nonetheless has a talent for getting suspects to confess to just about anything, whether they are guilty or not. This makes him a valuable man, despite his disinclination to work hard and his brutal, vengeful personality. He hoped that the undercover assignment with the Reformed Church of Death's Sting would be an easy assignment, that he wouldn't have to work very hard and might get to rough up a few scrawny hippie kids in the bargain. Instead it turned into the most important event in his life.

A third generation cop from Minnesota, Melvin suffered under an overbearing, alcoholic father. He grew up with a serious chip on his shoulder, and the sight of anyone who looked weak or helpless always got him dangerously excited. As a member of Ken Cantrick's inner circle, he doesn't have to restrain himself and can hand out casual kicks and blows to anyone he feels like. He's hungry to gain occult power, since this will give him even more ways to hurt and dominate people.

If a PC tries to infiltrate the cult, he may make contact with them and reveal that he's an undercover cop. Then once he has learned as much as he can about their plans, he'll betray them to Ken Cantrick. He still reports to his superiors on a regular basis, but he feeds them false information and tries to find out everything he can about the investigation. Whether or not he gets to warn Ken Cantrick about the upcoming raid is up to the GM. The county authorities may or may not tell the PCs that they have a man on the inside, depending on how much they trust them.

During the assault on the farm, Deputy Darnell will try to tell any PCs or police officers who attack him that he's an undercover cop, show them his credentials and then shoot them in the back at the first opportunity.

A tall, muscular blonde man with a moustache and an ugly facial scar, Detective Darnell has a thick upper Midwest accent and smiles a lot, especially when he's applying psychological cruelty to someone.

Rank-and-File Cultists
Ordinary people who got caught up in the cult. Some were seeking wisdom, some were seeking power and some were ensnared by Ken Cantrick's personal magnetism. Each one has a story of their own to tell.

Avril Wendt
PL: 2

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 2
Defense: 2 (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** -1

Skills: Diplomacy 4(+4), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+2), Knowledge (Popular Culture) +6 (+6), Notice 2 (+2), Perform (Singing) 4 (+4), Sense Motive 5 (+4)
Feats: Attractive, Equipment 2 (10 points worth), Sneak Attack
Equipment: Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Light-Caliber Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)
Complications: Consumed with self-loathing and shame.
Background: A desperate woman, crazed with grief and remorse, Avril has given herself over to Death's Sting to atone for a murder she didn't really commit.

Avril was a party girl in college, eager to free herself from her oppressive holy-roller parents. She got pregnant in her sophomore year and her boyfriend begged her to marry him instead of having an abortion. She reluctantly agreed. She didn't love him and suspected that it wasn't his baby, but she didn't want the secret shame of an abortion hanging around her neck for the rest of her life, either. Anyway being a housewife would be an easy life—or so she thought.

Avril's boyfriend, Aaron, wasn't mature enough to be much of a husband, let alone a father. Most of the exhausting work of caring for her new baby fell on Avril's narrow shoulders. She couldn't cope with the stress and exhaustion.

Soon Aaron grew impatient with her, announced that she was no longer the woman he had fallen in love with, and left. His family had always hated Avril for dragging him out of college, so they supported him in his decision and sent him to another school, far across the country.

Avril was left with no choice but to move back in with her parents, as much as she dreaded their harsh control. Her parents weren't enthusiastic about the idea, either. When they heard that she might try to move in with them, they hastily arranged to have a large part of their house remodeled, to make it impossible for at least a few months. Perhaps by then they could think of another excuse. They needn't have waited. Exhausted, miserable and desperate, Avril abandoned her infant in his stroller on a street corner and fled into the night. It was Christmas Eve. She is convinced that he must have died of cold and exposure, (although in fact he was found within an hour, and presently lives in a foster home). Little Roland was never a source of anything but weary misery to Avril. Even his smiles and coos were never enough to make up for the midnight feedings and dirty diapers. Yet despite never having really bonded with him, as soon as she thought Roland was dead, Avril was utterly consumed with guilt.

She would do anything to make up for her crime. Since that awful Christmas Eve, she has been obsessed with finding Roland's spirit and begging his forgiveness. She never found anyone who seemed to have the power to really do this, until she came to the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death. She knows they're evil, she knows they do bad things. But they're the only chance she has of setting right her crime.

A silly, carefree, gentle young woman by nature, the last few years have aged her badly. There are deep lines around her mouth and eyes, and her blonde hair is actually beginning to turn gray, even though she's only twenty-one. While Avril tries to look chipper and happy, there is a hysterical edge to it, and you can see from looking at her face that she cries a lot and sometimes wakes up screaming. The moment she thinks no one is looking at her,

Avril lapses into an expression of utter despair.

She wouldn't normally be capable of murder. In college she couldn't even bring herself to spread malicious gossip. But if she's confronted by a PC or a policeman during the raid, she might be desperate enough to kill. There is exactly a 50% chance that she'll attack if confronted and a 50% chance that she'll run away. Roll at random. Even she doesn't know what she's going to do in advance.

Robert Lowell Harrington
PL: 2

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 12 (-1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 2
Defense: 2 (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Concentrate 2 (+1), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 3 (+5), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 5 (+7), Knowledge (Philosophy and Religion) 4 (+6), Notice 2 (+1), Stealth 4 (+5)
Feats: Benefit (Wealth) 3, Connected, Equipment 2 (10 points worth),
Equipment: Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Light-Caliber Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)
Background: A rich kid with money to burn and a disinclination to work or go to school, Robert Harrington has been on a long spiritual quest since adolescence. He has gone through a Buddhist phase and a Cabbalist phase and a Tantric phase and even a Christian phase in his journey of self-discovery. By the age of twenty-five he has found enlightenment more times than most people do in a dozen incarnations.

Robert goes to college some of the time, but is more frequently found on ashrams and retreats. He was going through what he calls a "heavy Satanist phase" when he found the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death. To his amazement, unlike any group he had previously belonged to, they were absolutely, totally for real. They had the mystical power and terrible secrets he'd been looking for all these years. This has shaken him, but it hasn't destroyed his boundless self-confidence. He's from a rich old family in Marin County, north of San Francisco, and no matter where his quest has taken him his parents have always been there for him to come back to. If he gets in a huge legal mess over the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death, his devoted parents will swoop down to his aid with lawyers and cash. He's never misbehaved this badly before, and they will be angry with him for having gotten mixed up with such an obviously irresponsible group, but they love him and they'll do anything to bring him home safely. He knows this, and it fills him with self-confidence.

Cocky, smug, pompous, loud and shallow, he thinks he's a really smart guy and he expects you to think so, too. He's friendly, even overbearing, to any new recruits.

When Robert isn't dressed up in the regalia of one or another cult, he wears expensive black turtlenecks and little round sunglasses. His dark curly hair comes down to his collar and often hangs in his eyes. He has a tiny soul-patch beard under his lower lip.

Robert is too shallow to really want to die for Death's Sting. How he behaves during the assault on the farm depends completely on whether or not anyone else is watching him. If he is alone, he'll lose his nerve and be unable to kill anyone. If his fellow cultists can see him, he'll go down fighting just to impress them. Perhaps his mom and dad can buy his way out of Hell.

Tom Nording
PL: 2

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 2
Defense: 2 (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2 **Reflexes Save:** 1 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+3), Climb 4 (+5), Drive 2 (+2), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+2), Notice +2 (+2), Stealth 6 (+6)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 points worth),

Fearless, Sneak Attack
Equipment: Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Light-Caliber Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)
Complications: Delusional, willing to kill or die for the cult, thinks his dead brother is still alive and that this is the only way to save him.
Background: "Claw" likes to pick on Tom, but he's still one of the cult's strongest supporters. He joined up initially to find out what had become of his twin brother Larry, who joined the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death last year.

Unlike many identical twins, Larry and Tom weren't especially close. They had drifted apart in high school and became a part of very different crowds.

Tom joined the track and field team and started hanging out with the popular kids. Tom wasn't a superb athlete and while he was handsome, he was a little shy and hesitant. He was just enough of a good-looking jock to be tentatively welcome on the outer edge of the in-crowd. Larry hung out with nerds and occultists. Pretty soon Tom's new jock friends wanted him to pick on Larry and his crowd, and in order to be liked, he went along with it.

Larry's bad experiences in high school broke him, made him into a shy, disturbed loner with a fascination for witchcraft. He dropped put of high school, worked for a while at an all-night convenience store, then joined the Reformed Church of Death's Sting and vanished.

Tom followed him out of guilt, desperate to make amends and get him out of the cult's clutches. He needn't have bothered. Six months before Tom showed up, Larry decided that he had had enough of the cult's bloodthirsty craziness, asked to leave and got sacrificed to Death's Sting. He's "behind the machine-shed" (as Marla Graves likes to call it), sealed in an oil drum and buried in a shallow grave.

Tom left college for what he thought would be a semester to find Larry and bring him home. It didn't take long for Ken Cantrick to figure out what he was up to and brainwash him thoroughly. Tom has been through an amazing amount of physical and psychological abuse and he's been badly traumatized. He's convinced that his brother is alive and that if he only does what Ken says, they'll let Larry go. This has become a mad, guilt-driven obsession for him, and he's willing to do anything for the cult to make it happen. In fact, he's downright eager to do horrible, immoral things at Ken Cantrick's request, since this will let him prove himself.

Tom is a skinny, handsome young blonde man with a faint surf-bum accent and sad, guilty, haunted eyes. Bashful and tentative, he speaks slowly and cautiously when he isn't worked up into a frenzy of fanatic zeal.

Demons

The PCs are really supposed to win the fight at the ranch. The rest of the plot hinges on it. However, if you feel that they will beat the cultists too easily, and won't feel the right level of menace, then feel free to say that Ken Cantrick had time to summon up a little surprise for them from the deepest pit of Hell.

If the PCs meet with either one of the following PL10 Demons, they should come across them suddenly and unexpectedly for maximum dramatic effect. Perhaps they smash open a locked door or come around a corner, and there they are, abruptly face to face with a nightmare.

Whenever and wherever they stumble across the demon, the GM should make it obvious that this entity was summoned recently, for the purpose of fighting them. There should be a pentagram hastily burned into the floor or the ground nearby, with black candles that are still burning at its points and a wet, meaty offering or two still glistening at the center. There should probably be no evidence of a recent human sacrifice nearby, since that would imply that the PCs got here just a moment too late to save someone from getting murdered, and this would both make the tone too dark and make it look like the GM is purposefully messing with them.

Demon #1

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2) **Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus**:10
Defense: 10 (+6 Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 8
Reflexes Save: 7 **Willpower Save:** 10

Skills: Intimidate 10 (+14)
Feats: Dodge Focus 4, Evasion 2, Improved Critical (with Hellfire Control)
Powers: Hellfire Control 10 (Extras: Area, Selective; Power Feats: Alternate Power [Disintegration 6]), Deflect (All Ranged Attacks) 10, Element Control (Flame) 10
Complications: Barely sentient, understands nothing about human
Background: This demon has been hastily summoned into the body of a twelve-year-old girl. She staggers around like a puppet, bleeding from the corners of her eyes and setting anything she looks at on fire. A gibbering, reeking cloud whirls above her frail body and long thin streamers reach down from it, wrapping around her slender arms and legs, moving her like the marionette strings.

PCs who want to avoid hitting the demon's host can direct their attacks at the cloud with no penalty—it's effectively a part of the same entity and has the same defenses. It doesn't matter anyway—the girl won't take damage from attacks targeted at the demon. If it is defeated, she will collapse to the ground, unconscious but unhurt.

The demon is a ravening beast. It knows to attack anyone who isn't a cultist, but that's about all it understands. It can't drive a car or turn on a light switch—it takes a full-round action for it to go through closed doors because it has difficulty understanding doorknobs. It speaks, but only to spout gibberish and incoherent threats. It likes to utter disgusting, scary word salad like: *"retarded children scream in the murder-machine for forty-thousand years, scream your name and you do not save them, rave them, cave them caving in the world is caving in and God laughs on his throne of skulls and drink you, drinks your blood, I drink your **BLOOOOD!**"*

It says these things only to terrify, has no idea what they mean, and possesses no useful information, either about Death's Sting or anything else. A Knowledge (Arcane Lore) check vs. DC 20 will reveal the fact that this particular type of demon can be freely clobbered without any risk of damaging its host.

In case the sight of an adolescent bleeding from her eyeballs and shrieking crazed blasphemy is too dark for your game, we have also provided you with stats for a more "four color" sort of demon. See below.

Demon 2

Str: 30 (+10)/20 (+5) **Dex:** 14 (+2)
Con: 18 (+4) **Int:** 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3)
Cha: 14 (+2) **Initiative:** 2
Attack Bonus:10 **Defense:** 10
Toughness Save: 10 (Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 10 **Reflexes Save:** 8
Willpower Save: 2 (+7 vs. psychic attack with Mind Shield)

Skills: Intimidate 5 (+7), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 5 (+7), Notice 5 (+8)
Feats: Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Grapple, Power Attack, Startle
Powers: Enhanced Strength 10, Impervious Toughness 4, Immunity 10 (Life Support and Immunity to Aging), Mind-Shield 5, Protection (Extra: Impervious) 6, Regeneration 5 (+5 to Recovery Rate), Super-Senses (Detect Invisible Creatures, Detect Magic, Detect Coins and Other

Valuable Objects, Low-light Vision) 4, Super-Strength 8 (Maximum Lift:
Complications: Has to do whatever his summoner tells him to.
Drawbacks: Hideous (very common, moderate) -4pts
Background: This is Malgazzurebb, a jovial, portly creature with red skin, horns and all the rest of the things you expect to see on a demon. He even has a cloven hoof on one foot. He's technically the demon of finding treasure and opening locks, he will ruefully explain to the PCs, but it was short notice and he was the best Mr. Cantrick could summon. Violence isn't really his specialty—which of the PCs would it be most polite of him to kill first?

If they don't answer, he sighs and says *"well then I hope you don't mind if I just pick for you."* And then, as he pummels the heroes, he will ask them if he's doing it right.

For someone who isn't used to violence, he's pretty good at it. If he lands a particularly solid blow on a Player Character, he'll smile and say *"you know, I think I'm starting to get the hang of this! Gracious, violence is fun!"*

If one of the PCs thinks to ask him if there's any treasure around, he'll helpfully indicate that there is in fact a discarded nickel lying at their feet, and some other loose change under a bench in the chapel. If the PC stoops down to pick up the nickel, he will hit them and gleefully say that that was his first sucker punch—and it was as great as everyone says it is!

If they ask him why Ken Cantrick didn't summon him to open the bank vault back in Chapter One (since he is after all the demon of opening locks) he laughs and says *"I'm sorry, I just made up the part about opening locks to sound more impressive, although I really am the demon of locating treasure."*

He has no sense of honor in combat and does not mind hitting someone from behind, or while they are down. Yet he takes no especial pleasure in torturing or mutilating them, either. While he is a clever conversationalist, and good company (for a nightmarish fiend from Hell, anyway) he won't reveal anything of any importance to the PCs. He does not know when or where Death's Sting is coming back, where Ken Cantrick is keeping the hostage (if he has one) or anything else the PCs can use. He has heard through the demonic grapevine that Death's Sting will return soon, but of course the PCs already know this.

If he is rendered unconscious or destroyed, he vanishes like a soap bubble, leaving nothing behind but a faint unpleasant smell. Perhaps the GM can use him again in some future adventure. If so, he'll remember the PCs. and greet them cordially. He bears no grudges, even if the PCs insulted him or destroyed him in some painful or humiliating way.

The Cops
Here are stats and background information on various law-enforcement personnel who might get involved in the adventure.

Trooper Leslie Gaddis
PL: 3

Str: 14 (+2)	**Dex:** 12 (+1)	**Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0)	**Wis:** 12 (+1)	**Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1	**Attack Bonus**:3	**Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 4 (+1 without body armor)		**Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 1		**Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Climb 2 (+3), Drive 2 (+3), Investigate 4 (+4), Medicine 2 (+2), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Police Officer) 4
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw
Equipment: Nightstick (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)
Complications: Too nice for his own good, expects the best of everybody.
Background: This is the State Trooper who has been assigned to checking up on the Reformed Church of Death's Sting. The Church has been paying him to look the other way, and report back to his superiors that nothing unusual is going on. He probably won't play much of a direct role in this adventure, but if you need some stats and a back-story for him, here they are.

Gaddis is a friendly, pleasant, round-faced young man, with a prominent gap between his front teeth. He's physically strong, but is slightly overweight no matter how much he works out. Gaddis joined the State Troopers because he wanted to help people, and because his father and uncles were all policemen. He's a nice guy, maybe a little too inclined to cut people slack and let them off with warnings, the kind of cop who hopes he won't ever have to shoot anyone. He's also a new father, in debt up to his eyeballs, and has no idea how to cope with it.

Gaddis married a local girl straight out of college. They liked each other a lot, but didn't really have much practical knowledge of how to run a household together. They bought a trailer, ran up some big credit card bills through poor planning, and when Dora gave birth they were suddenly a one-income family. She's getting really depressed and hasn't been taking good care of the house or the baby.

Les scrambles to keep his little household together on a cop's income, doing housework and playing with his infant daughter in what little free time his job leaves him. To his credit, he hasn't started getting angry or frustrated with his poor hapless wife. Instead he's scared. Bill collectors are starting to call and they always seem to slip a little further behind each month. His dad lives on a police pension and can't help them out. Dora's mom is on Social Security, and is too frail to even help watch the baby.

Les is conflicted about taking money from Ken Cantrick but he feels like he has no other choice. Even with the $50 a week that the Church is paying him, he's still in bad financial trouble. How bad would things get without it? Les has talked this over with his dad, who assures him that there isn't any shame in taking the odd bribe. He never did it himself, but he doesn't look down on cops who do. This answer has only partly satisfied Les.

Trooper Gaddis has no idea that the Church is responsible for any serious crimes—he assumes that they want the cops to stay away because they're smoking grass or sunbathing nude or something like that. Part of the arrangement is that he doesn't actually go near the property on his patrols, so he's had no chance to see or hear anything really dreadful happening.

Typical SWAT Team Member
PL: 6

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
Con: 12 (+1) **Int:** 12 (+1)
Wis: 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 5 (+1 without body armor)
Fortitude Save: 3 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Drive 3 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+5), Medicine 2 (+3), Knowledge (tactics) +4 (+5), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (policeman) 4 (+5), Stealth 5 (+6)
Feats: Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment)
Equipment: Body Armor (+4 Toughness), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage [Extra: Autofire]), Tonfa (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage)
Complications: Not allowed to harm civilians, subject to orders from superiors.
Background: It's possible that the PCs will manage to talk the state authorities into sending a SWAT team with them to assault the farm. This is a mixed blessing—both a help and a hindrance. Here are some stats for a generic member of the tactical unit they will put at the PCs' disposal. The State Police are proud of their tactical units and invest a lot of money in their equipment.

Most of these guys are brash young men with rural accents and military haircuts, who work tactical for the thrill of it. They are all very loyal to the unit's leader, Lieutenant Willis Baedeker, partly because he's a hard, scary guy and partly because he lets them get away with stuff that most commanders wouldn't. In his unit, you are permitted to take chances and rewarded if taking a risk pays off. This has made his men a little more reckless and trigger happy than most, although their success rate is undeniably high.

Lieutenant Willis Baedeker
PL: 7

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 15 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 13 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 5 **Attack Bonus**: 7 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 6 (+2 without body armor)
Fortitude Save: 3 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Climb 6 (+9), Drive 4 (+6), Intimidate 6 (+8), Medicine 2 (+3), Knowledge (tactics) +8 (+9), Notice 7 (+8), Profession (policeman) 4 (+5), Ride 4 (+5) Sense Motive 5 (+6), Stealth 5 (+7)
Feats: Chokehold, Equipment 4 (20 pts. of equipment), Fearless, Improved Aim, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Inspire, Leadership, Master Plan, Precise Shot, Startle
Equipment: Body Armor (+4 Toughness), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage [Extra: Autofire]), Huge Commando Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Tonfa (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage)
Complications: Has to obey orders from superiors, thrill-seeker.
Background: Here are some stats and background information on the SWAT team's leader, if you need them. A tall, burly man with huge sculpted muscles that make him look like a cover model from a health and fitness magazine, Willis Baedeker loves his work and it shows. He wears his black hair in a crew-cut, and has thick horn-rimmed glasses which his men joke make him look like a serial killer. They don't tell this joke in front of him.

Incorruptible, incapable of being bribed or threatened, he is utterly in love with being a cop and with police tactical work in particular. In fact he loves it a little too much. A thrill-seeker and an adrenaline junkie, he spends his off-duty time on "extreme" sports. He's totally fearless, doesn't care much for his own safety and isn't very careful about anyone else's. He has a keen sense of small-unit tactics, but he takes reckless chances in combat, and doesn't care if his men do the same. They love him for it, and for leading every charge himself.

Although he looks like a seasoned pro, the truth is that Baedecker hasn't been working tactical for long—he just got this job 18 months ago, and it's still going to his head. He always wanted to lead a SWAT team, always thought he'd be good at it, but he never realized that it would be quite so dangerously exciting. Perhaps he'll calm down with a little more experience. Or then again, perhaps he'll get worse.

He's never yet been involved in a friendly-fire incident, but it's only because he's lucky, and a gifted marksman.

Baedeker likes superheroes and he won't try to order the PCs around--he's sure they know what they're doing, and if they don't, who cares? They can operate independently from his team, or work with them if they'd rather. He will be willing to listen to any reasonable plan they might suggest to him, and if it sounds good, he'll give it a try (remember that he is a solid tactician, and will know a good plan when he hears one.)

While he is intense, in a focused, gung-ho kind of way, he seldom loses his temper and is unfailingly polite to civilians. He never seems to let his guard down completely. Even in social situations he's always a tactician, always looking for an edge.

Police Sharpshooters

If the PCs have managed to involve the State Police, and specifically request a sharpshooter, the authorities will send one or the other of these snipers with them. If they request two, they send both. If they demand more, they are told that these are the only two available at the moment. They are very different guys, with very different strengths and disadvantages, but they are both exceedingly good at their jobs and real assets to any team.

Zeb Pitt
PL: 6

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 7 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 6 (+1 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 6

Skills: Climb 10 (+11), Intimidate 3 (+3), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+5), Notice 8 (+11), Profession (Policeman) 4 (+5), Stealth 7 (+10), Survival 7 (+10)
Feats: Defensive Roll 5, Elusive Target, Equipment 1 (5 pts. of equipment), Improved Aim, Improved Critical (With Sniper Rifle), Improved Initiaitive 2, Sneak Attack, Track
Equipment: Sniper Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage)
Complications: Shy, subject to orders from superiors.
Background: He likes to call himself an Indiana hillbilly. He grew up hunting and shooting in the mountains on the Kentucky border—the closest thing Indiana has to a wilderness. He's lived in the PCs' home state for ten years now, after a four year stint in the Marines, but his accent is still pure Ozarks. Not that you get to hear it very much. He's a shy man, accustomed to spending long periods of time on his own in the forest, and he never speaks unless he has to. He's formal and courteous when he does talk, and is even more so around women (he feels even more shy around them, especially if he finds them attractive).

Tall and lanky, his hair is prematurely receding and he keeps it trimmed down to a pale blonde stubble. Despite being nervous around people, he is extremely cool under fire and always follows orders to the letter. He will shoot at whatever and whoever he ordered to, do it cleanly and quickly, without improvising or showing off. Unmarried, he has a long-term girlfriend who is also a cop (she's the dispatcher at a State Trooper post), and whom he doesn't spend enough time with. He uses every available moment of free time he has to hunt.

Larry Matsumoto
PL: 6

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 11 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6 **Toughness Save:** 5 (+1 without body armor)
Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 6

Skills: Climb 3 (+7), Intimidate 6 (+8), Knowledge (tactics) +4 (+5), Notice 8 (+11), Profession (Policeman) 4 (+5), Stealth 4 (+7), Survival 3 (+6)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Aim, Improved Critical (With Sniper Rifle), Improved Initiative 2, Sneak Attack, Track
Equipment: Body Armor (5 Toughness), Sniper Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage)
Complications: Overbearing bully, subject to orders from superiors.
Background: A loud, burly swaggering man with a thick Brooklyn accent, he's a bully and a show-off, but a superb sniper nonetheless. Third generation Japanese-American, he can't speak much Japanese, and jokes that his English isn't much better. He wears his hair in a bristly military cut and is constantly hitting people in a jovial, comradely kind of way. Larry has a lot of loud opinions that he seems to have picked up from Howard Stern (although he's a lot more politically conservative) and doesn't like women who think they're as good as guys. He learned his profession on the firing range and in the Army, although he does go hunting from time to time. Phenomenally talented, he has the Army's divisional marksmanship award and doesn't mind mentioning the fact. Despite the fact that he grew up in Brooklyn and never went hunting as a kid, he's at least as good a marksman as Zeb, and he shows a lot more inspiration and flair. Maybe a little too much inspiration and flair—he's kind of a showboat and tends to hotdog if he isn't told not to. Larry has been married three times and has five young kids by his current wife, although he seldom mentions his family, and isn't above hitting on any good-looking women in the PC's group.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ROAD TO TRANSYLVANIA

In the best of all possible worlds, the heroes have prevented the Reformed Church of the Sting of Death from harming Barry Robinson or his daughters, and ensured that he still has his copy of the *Liber Malerudorum*. Grateful for their help, and now seriously concerned, Barry starts to study the book in detail. He soon discovers that one grim chapter reveals information relating to a very rare astrological conjunction that will occur soon, and that it is connected with a being called Death's Sting. Because of his familiarity with local occult organizations, he makes the connection between this being and the Reformed Church. Checking other references to events predicted by the book's anonymous author, he soon realizes that the book is actually one hundred percent accurate in its predictions.

Of course, all this takes time, and it should probably happen "off-screen". The heroes have a few days to rest and recover (or possibly have an unconnected, single-session adventure) before a panicked Robinson contacts them. He explains nearly everything in the Background section of this book (although he doesn't know about the events involving the Nazis or the "Special Unit") and then reveals that Death's Sting will return in JUST TWO DAYS! However, Robinson is quick to point out the fact that the monster will be very weak immediately after his "resurrection", and that the heroes are in a unique position to do something permanent about him. The legends even reveal the location of his castle, the most likely location for the return to occur. And there is a description of his crypt, specific enough to recognize it by sight.

On the other hand, if Robinson has been killed, or lost one of his children, he won't be in any fit state to do research. If the heroes have the book (Robinson might have turned it over to them, wanting nothing more to do with it, or they might have captured it from Ken Cantrick) then a DC 25 Knowledge (arcane lore) is necessary to work out the meaning of the astrological references in the *Liber Malerudorum*, which will also give the heroes the name of Death's Sting. To find out the location of his castle, on the other hand, requires a working knowledge of either Magyar or Romanian, since the legends have only been written down in those two languages–-but fortunately, they're in every major collection of folktales in either tongue. If the PCs are stuck, and can't figure out where Death's Sting is going to appear, then the GM should take mercy on them and have the information turn up in Ken Cantrick's captured notebooks or on his laptop.

Unfortunately, once the PCs have figured out where Death's Sting will reappear, getting to that location will be a bit of headache. Just within the past few weeks, a cabal of Romanian army officers led a mutiny and seized control of all the territory in Romania north of the Transylvanian Alps and west of the Eastern Caucasus. (While this incorporates the Romanian regions known as the Banat and Maramures, the junta refers to the whole as the Union of Greater Transylvania, and it will

be called simply Transylvania in this text.) The junta currently controls the various passes leading through the mountains, and as the Bucharest government is unsure of the loyalty of those units still under its command, it has yet to launch a counterattack.

MAP OF ROMANIA

As yet, none of the surrounding nations have taken either side in this dispute, but the tense situation means that travel into the disputed territory is under heavy restrictions. In particular, foreign superheroes are being refused entry at customs—ostensibly they are all suspected of being agents for their respective governments. The heroes will need to either use their civilian identities, or other aliases if their identities are public knowledge. Disguises, particularly for famous heroes, might also be a good idea. The difficulties involved in smuggling battlesuits or other weapons through customs are left to the ingenuity of your players.

Of course, the heroes might be able to avoid all these difficulties (and others yet to come) if they have access to their own private aircraft, as many comic book teams do. However, they had better also have very good electronic counter-measures or stealth technology, because the Romanian government will scramble jets if their radar equipment detects unidentified flying objects heading for Transylvania, and getting involved in an international incident will do the PCs' reputations little good (the Transylvanian junta doesn't have any working fighters, but they do have some attack helicopters at their disposal; see Page 106 for stats and a description). Still, if they manage to sneak past the air defenses, they can probably pick a landing spot as close to their ultimate destination: the village of

Stegiocavar, in the Semenic mountain range, south of Resita.

Assuming that they use more conventional means to enter the country, the heroes have a choice of entry points into Transylvania: the cities of Cluj-Napoja or Timisoara. Regular flights to both cities depart daily from London's Heathrow airport, and getting there, from just about anywhere else in the world, should not be a problem. Timisoara is closer to the heroes' ultimate destination, but will be a security nightmare for the heroes, due to its status as the provisional capitol. Cluj is farther away, but security will be lighter.

The second stage of the journey involves getting from either Cluj or Timisoara to Resita. The simplest way is to take a train. The route from Timisoara to Resita is a three hour trip, while travelers from Cluj must first ride to Oradea (2 to 4 hours) and from there to Timisoara (3 to 4 hours), with the last leg as above.

You should probably skip over most of the journey without a lot of roleplaying (unless the PCs get stopped by the authorities) but if your players ask, Oradea is a charming old town with beautiful 19th century architecture and a big castle, while Resita is a sprawling, run-down industrial zone (about 83,000 people live there) full of foundries and steel mills, some of them more than 100 years old.

Whether or not the heroes board the train at Timisoara or simply pass through there, the car and its passengers will be examined by armed troops in the Timisoara station. Unlike the inspectors at the airports, who are deadly serious about keeping "dangerous elements" out of their fledgling nation, the search at the train station is mostly a formality. Of course, if the heroes have done anything to draw attention to themselves, it might be much less informal.

Another option is to rent a vehicle and drive to Resita. However, drivers on the main roads will be stopped several times at security check points, which, while even less thorough than the train inspection described above, will probably slow the heroes down to the point where it's just as fast to take the train. Driving on the backroads is a sure way to get hopelessly lost.

Getting to Stegociavar by Road

If the PC's don't know precisely how reach Stegociavar from Resita, before they leave for Romania, then any good local map will show the PCs how to get to the village. Most local people can direct them, too, but remember that Resita is a stronghold of the Iron Guard, an uneasy place where people now fear informers. Whether or not a given person is willing to offer directions to obvious foreigners depends on who is watching.

About two miles to the south of Resita, on a two-lane blacktop road through the forest, a dirt lane curves away up the mountain. A sign beside the road mentions Stegociavar and two other villages which can be found up this rude track. The road is in lousy shape, deeply rutted and probably impassable in rainy weather.

There is a military roadblock right at the turn-off, and another one further up the mountain. See below for details about each roadblock. The soldiers who man these checkpoints have been instructed to let no one through. They are tense, unsure why they've been asked to guard this place but aware that it's something important. When the PCs see the first roadblock, they may decide to ditch their vehicle somewhere down the road and try to find their way through the woods. This is easier than you might think. There are a lot of well-used foot trails leading through the forest and most of them lead straight to Stegociavar. It's only a Survival Check vs. DC 10 to find a suitable trail.

Roadblock #1

It would be hard to tell that this muddy dirt track leading off the two-lane blacktop actually goes to Stegociavar, except for the roadblock. Two battered-up old green military trucks stand parked in the dirt—leftovers from the Soviet era. A group of ten soldiers stands around and behind them. They seem to have set up some bivouac tents over to the left side of the road (no one is sleeping in them at the

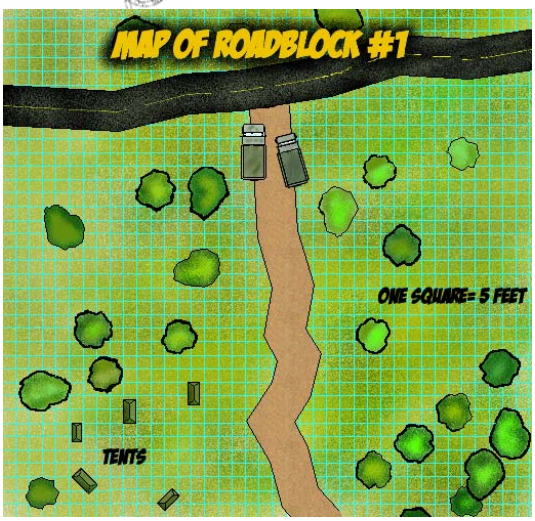
moment). As the PCs approach the trucks, a soldier waves for them to pull up. Then the soldier, the duty sergeant and the lieutenant who commands this detail will walk over to the window of the PCs' vehicle and motion for them to roll the windows down. Both the Lieutenant and the Sergeant are members of the cult of Death's Sting, and both of them are wearing lapel pins that bear his symbol.

Use the stats from Appendix B "Military Forces of Transylvania" for the soldiers and the officer. The soldiers are Infantrymen, the Lieutenant is an Officer, the Sergeant has a lot of experience—use the Elite Soldier template for him. The Lieutenant speaks some English, and will ask the PCs "What you are doing here?" when they roll down the window.

It's virtually impossible to make a Bluff roll here to get past these men. There is simply no good excuse for a bunch of foreigners to be going up the mountain. If a PC has some kind of superhuman charisma, Mind-Control or some other such power, they might just be able to talk their way past the Lieutenant (it might also be possible if they read his mind and figure out a password which indicates that they are members of the cult of Death's Sting). His men will think this is mighty weird, however, and one of them will call ahead to warn the next roadblock without his permission.

It's very likely that the PCs will have to fight their way past these soldiers. If they do, then let them see one of the men shouting something into a radio (he's calling the HQ in Resita for backup). No backup actually arrives while the PCs are on the mountain—this is just to help create tension. Unless of course you want to make the encounter more dangerous (see the section on increasing the challenge on Page 53).

Anyone who takes either the Lieutenant or the Sergeant hostage is in for a nasty surprise. Both of these men are fanatics, and will yell at the other soldiers to shoot through them. The Lieutenant is unpopular, and his men will gladly comply with his request.



The Second Checkpoint

As mentioned above, the Player Characters may choose to evade the second roadblock altogether and reach Stegociavar overland. They might even fly or teleport there. If they fly over the second checkpoint, the soldiers manning the roadblock get very agitated and actually fire off a few rounds at them, with a negligible chance of actually hitting anyone.

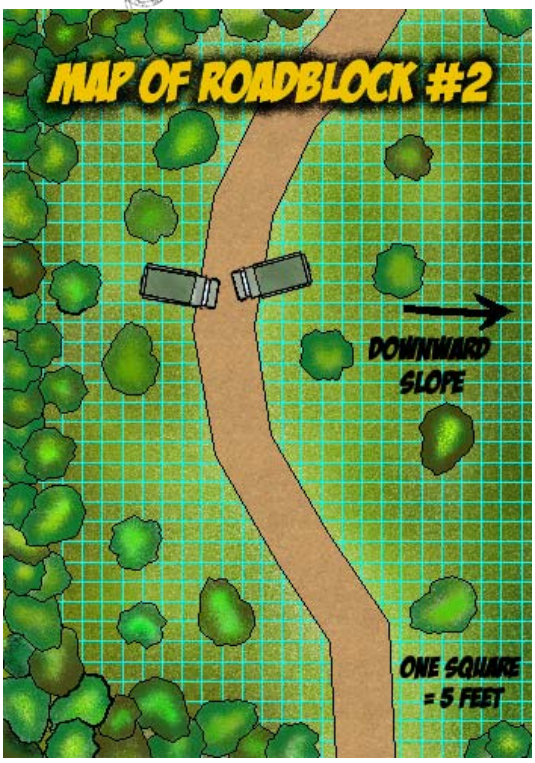
If they decide to take the road, then let them decide what hour of the day or night they do it. Whether they arrive before or after dark, it is raining by the time the PCs reach roadblock #2—a cold, dismal, frigid pinprick rain that lances through their clothes. The sky is full of clouds, huge, dark and threatening.

The guards here are considerably more nervous and trigger happy than the ones down the road, but how exactly they react to the PCs depends on a number of factors. If the PCs destroyed the first checkpoint, then they may well just fire on them as they approach. If they bluffed their way past somehow, then the soldiers at Checkpoint 2 will still be extremely suspicious, and they will want to know how a bunch of unauthorized intruders got past the first roadblock. They won't bother asking the PCs to roll down their windows, instead they yell at them as they approach the checkpoint, motion for them to stop the car, and then five of them will jog up to the car through the rain, yank the doors open,

shouting in Romanian to get out and lean up against the car. They will half-escort, half-drag anybody in the vehicle out before they have a chance to get out themselves, lean them up against the side of the vehicle and start barking questions at them as they frisk them. They get this treatment even if they mind-controlled someone down at the first checkpoint into calling ahead for them (something about the message didn't sound quite right). The soldiers will want the following information from the PCs: Where is your ID? Where are you from? Why are you here? How did you get past the first checkpoint? Their orders are to let nobody through at all, so if the PCs manage to charm, mind-control, or otherwise trick one or two of them into letting them through, the others will know at once that something is wrong. If the PCs get into trouble here, they won't be arrested, just shoved back into their car and told in English: "You go! Nobody to come up here!"

If at any point they try to approach the roadblock itself, the guards yell out exactly one warning. If the PCs continue to approach, they start firing.

This encounter is likely to end in a firefight, unless the Player Characters decide to take the better part of valor and retreat back down the mountain in their vehicle, only to ditch it on the side of the road and start climbing the slopes overland. If they do, it takes only a Survival Check vs. DC 10 to find one another of the well-marked foot trails that lead to Stegiocavar.



Adjusting the Challenge for Your PCs

It's simple to make either of these encounters easier. Just make the guards less vigilant, or have them take more time to get organized and concentrate their fire on the PCs. To make it tougher, you can assume that a pair of attack helicopters (you can find stats for them on Page 107) patrols the areas and have them come on the scene just as things devolve into a firefight. Or, add a Sniper (see Page 102) to the group and assume he's stationed some distance away, under cover. To make it tougher still, throw the White Eagle at them (see Page 100).

What If: If the heroes try to contact the leaders of the Transylvanian junta, either before or after they arrive in the country, in order to alert them to the threat of Death's Sting and/or ask for assistance, they are in for an unpleasant surprise. They will be denied entry to the country, or, if they have already arrived, arrested for espionage. The leaders of the junta are also the leaders of the European cult of Death's Sting. Unlike Ken Cantrick, they have been aware of precisely when and where their master would return, and planned their power grab to coincide with the time. They also realize that Death's Sting will be weakened after his resurrection, and intend to give him time to recover his strength before they approach him, so as not to present a threat. If they learn of a plan to destroy their god, they will understandably make every effort to have the heroes killed, especially if it seems that they have discovered their biggest secret.

A Few Basic Facts About Romania:
Here is an absolute beginner's guide to Romania, for players who have just a few brief moments to brush up on the country before they hurry off to face Death's Sting.

Romania isn't a Slavic country. Since the days of the Roman Empire they have in fact spoken a Romance language, which sounds a lot like Spanish or Italian. Modern Romanians are proud of being Latin, and the way it distinguishes them from their Balkan neighbors. People who have traveled there say that Romanians are on the whole more lighthearted and relaxed than, say, Russians or Serbs, but it's hard to make blanket statements like that about an entire people. They are more polite in public than the citizens of most ex-Warsaw Pact nations. No one will jostle you on the street here, or yell at you for some minor lapse in pedestrian etiquette. Nor is there as much alcoholism.

Romania is wilder than most parts of Europe, with a number of stretches of actual wilderness up in the Carpathian mountains of Transylvania. Bucharest is a modern city, but it's not hard to find places in the countryside where nobody has electricity or running water.

Romania has long been divided into three areas: the plains of Wallachia in the south, the mountains of Transylvania in the north and Moldavia in the northeast, by the Black Sea. These three areas warred among themselves for centuries, but by the time they were all conquered by the Ottoman Turks in the sixteenth century, they had enough common enemies to put aside their differences. They actually managed to get free of Ottoman domination just before World War One, in which they participated.

After World War One, the map of Europe got redrawn at the Council of Versailles, and Romania did quite well compared to its neighbors, largely thanks to the aggressive efforts of their tough (and beautiful) Queen Marie. But by the 1930s they had lapsed into fascism under the crazed Prime Minister Ion Antinescu, who ruled with the help of a secret society of nationalist thugs called the "Iron Guard". Romania actually joined the Axis without getting conquered by it first. Prime Minister Antinescu was overthrown during the course of the war, and King Michael threw in his lot with the Allies, making Romania one of the few countries to have fought on both sides of World War II. Alas, this didn't save them from getting thrown to the Soviets after the war. They remained under the domination of the Soviets until the Union collapsed in the 1990s.

Romania had the unfortunate distinction of being one of the very worst places to live in the Warsaw Pact. The dictator Nicolae Ceacescu, who took power in the 1960s, was a megalomaniacal sadist. He tortured opponents of the state by giving them radiation therapy until their bodies bloomed with exotic cancers, he did his best to annihilate the country's gypsies, and he bulldozed a sixth of Bucharest to build a giant, crazy, architectural nightmare which he called the House of the People (this huge ugly monstrosity remains the world's second largest building; only the Pentagon is bigger). He also mandated that Romania increase its birth rate, then put vast numbers of the resulting children in dingy

state-run orphanages where a lot of them died. Those orphans who displayed unusual strength and aggression were taken out of the system and raised separately as his own personal guard, the dreaded Securitate, with no family but the state and no father but Ceaucescu.

When the Warsaw Pact disintegrated, the Ceaucescu regime was violently overthrown, Securitate fought viciously to preserve the dictatorship. They were some of the most lethal killers on earth, trained from childhood with no other aim, but even they couldn't stand against the wrath of the people.

There are bullet marks and bomb scars all over Bucharest to this day. Ceacescu himself got caught and shot by an impromptu firing squad as he tried to flee the country. They shot his wife, too.

Since the fall of the dictatorship the road to democracy has been a rocky one. After the revolution, the country elected a former Communist Party official named Ion Illescu, who revived the Iron Guard and cracked down hard on anyone who opposed his policies. He got kicked out in another election, after some violent protests in which a fair number of demonstrators got savagely beaten by the police. The new elected leadership is considerably better, but the country remains volatile and poor, its future uncertain. The coup in Transylvania still took everyone by surprise.

Notes for the GM: What's it Actually Like? Transylvania is really atmospheric and foreboding, so don't miss out on the opportunity to describe it to your PCs.

This may be the last real wilderness in Europe. Most experienced European travelers are startled at just how wild Transylvania still is. The roads are often dirt tracks, the mountains are huge and bleak and all around you. These are serious mountains—more like the Rockies than the Alps, craggy and jagged and black. Many of them are tall enough to have glaciers, or even perpetual snowcaps. Pine forests fill the valleys, deep and trackless. Shepherds walk the mountain pastures with their flocks. There really are still plenty of isolated villages on the heights that don't yet have electricity or running water, where you can see people wearing their traditional costumes. It can be a little eerie, like stepping onto the set of some old Dracula movie. You can use this with good effect when describing the scene to your players, but make sure they understand that you know it's weird to see Europeans walking around in 19th century clothes, and that you're not just ignorant.

There are occasional roadblocks and military checkpoint in the mountains, but for the most part the coup's leaders have focused on locking down the towns, and the passes leading south to the main part of Romania. If however the PCs attempt to go anywhere near Stegiocavar, they will have to pass at least two unusually well-manned road blocks staffed by no less that ten professional soldiers, who will attempt to keep them from passing (although they're hardly likely to be able to stop a group of superheroes). See Pages 51-53 for maps and details. Stats for the soldiers and officers manning the roadblocks can be found in Appendix B, on Pages 102-104.

Dealing with the locals may be difficult. Romanians are a little shyer and more formal than most Eastern Europeans, and the coup has made this much worse. It used to be that folks in the more isolated villages would react with amazement if they found out you were a foreigner, and would offer to let you stay the night in their private residences and ply you all evening with questions about England or America or wherever you happened to be from. Now they're afraid to have anything to do with strangers. Sometimes they won't even sell you goods. The Iron Guard is everywhere, always watching, and everyone is afraid.

Isolated shepherds still tend to be friendly if approached by themselves, (there's no one around to see them talking to you and report them) but they don't keep very good track of their dogs, who are infamous for running down and killing lone hikers. Any hiking guide will tell you, don't go near a shepherd's flock if you're alone. You take your life in your hands around those dogs. This could provide an

interesting minor side-adventure for the PCs, if you have a little extra time.

The PCs' itinerary probably won't keep them in any major towns for very long, but if they spend much time in Cluj or Timisoara, be sure to describe the strange architectural mix of charming, ancient wooden buildings that look like they've come right out of a book of Balkan fairy tales, and grubby cement tower blocks from the 1960s.

Both Cluj and Timisoara used to be hip places, with a lot of nightlife, artists and young bohemians dressed in black, lounging around the outdoor cafes, text-messaging one another on their cell phones. Things have suddenly changed. The new military authorities have clamped down particularly hard in the big towns. The streets are deserted, most stores have closed up shop. There are disorganized roadblocks scattered at random around most major intersections. Sometimes the guys manning the checkpoints are professional soldiers in crisp new uniforms, sometimes they're drunken members of the Iron Guard wearing dingy street clothes. They are all given to harassing random bystanders for no particular reason. Sometimes, if they're bored, they will pick some poor person and force them to do something humiliating. It's not surprising that most people are afraid to go out or that most of the shops and dance clubs are closed.

No one has yet figured out how to get services like trash collection up and running again, so the garbage is piling up in the empty streets. Electricity is off and on and off again. Water shortages are starting to happen. The local economy is taking quite a beating from all the disruption—but of course that won't matter much once Death's Sting returns.

What Can the PC's Find Out About the Coup?

Some PCs may attempt to prepare themselves for their trip to Transylvania by finding out more about the situation there in advance. There isn't much for them to learn.

The mainstream press is being oddly vague about the events in Transylvania—they aren't even reporting the names of the junta's leaders and the whole thing is getting very little coverage. A Player Character who has Contacts in the media or the government can find out a little more. The reason that no one has much information about the coup is that it came as a total shock to everyone. The CIA is embarrassed that they didn't see it coming, the Pentagon's intelligence agencies don't know what to make of it and most Western news agencies didn't have correspondents mobilized in the field to cover it. The Romanian central government also seems to have been taken completely by surprise, although that's harder to be sure of (if the PCs actually have contacts inside Romania itself, they can conform this).

The new Transylvanian authorities have barely made any pronouncements to the world press and they're turning journalists away from their borders. There are bloggers in places like Cluj who are reporting on conditions in the towns, but all they have to say is that soldiers and paramilitary thugs turned up on streetcorners, started stopping traffic and hassling people.

The PCs contacts (or a Knowledge: History roll vs. DC 15) will tell them that Romania has traditionally been split into three distinct regions. Wallachia (the fertile plains in the South), Transylvania (the mountains and forests in the north) and Moldavia (the northeastern corner, near the boundary of Russia and the Ukraine). However, all three regions share a common language and culture, and there has never been much strife between them. This is not Yugoslavia. There are very few Romanians who think of themselves as, say, Moldavian nationalists or ethnic Transylvanians. They have pretty much all viewed themselves as Romanians for a very long time. The coup doesn't make sense, at least if the world's understanding of Romania is correct. Can everyone really have been so wrong about what's been going on inside this country?

The PCs' contacts can also tell them that a rural paramilitary group called the Iron Guard may be involved in the Coup. The Iron Guard is something like Romania's

equivalent of the Klu Klux Klan—a violent, secretive fascist group that haunts the country's isolated rural north. The Iron Guard sided with Hitler during World War II and were driven deep underground after the war's end, but they have undergone a resurgence in recent years. Other facts on Romania and its history are easy to find. See the section: "A Few Basic Facts About Romania" on Page 54

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE COUP

The coup in Transylvania has been masterminded by a cabal of six Romanian Army officers, all of them native Transylvanians. All six of them have been hearing Death's Sting call to them in their dreams since childhood, and all six are his secret devotees. Apart from that, their backgrounds are very different, and only three of them knew about one another before they began to plan their mutiny.

Constantin and Adrian Dragomir are twin brothers from the mining country around Resita. Their parents died while they were infants, and they were raised by a family that was deeply involved in the Iron Guard. They were raised to revere fascism and the King in secret. They never told their adoptive family that they had worshipped an even more secret king since they were infants in the cradle. They both rose quickly through the ranks of the officer corps, and commanded sizeable infantry units by the time they were thirty. They also had extensive connections among the Iron Guard.

Radu Cozma was a childhood friend of the terrifying Dragomir twins. He has been their toady ever since his first year of military academy. He's do anything for the twins, or for his other, secret master. He too had become a prominent commander, well-liked by his men and in a position to subvert them.

Marius Vladu was an orphan, a child of the state, one of tens of thousands of children in Ceacescu's dysfunctional network of federal child-care facilities. He was tougher and crueler than his fellow children, so he was sent to live on a training camp in the Carpathians, where he was raised to be one of the dictator's elite killers. He had no father but the state—and of course Death's Sting. An important member of the SRI (the security agency tasked with maintaining the loyalty of Romania's army) he was able to conceal the growing mutiny from the authorities in Bucharest until his fellow mutineers were ready to strike.

Bogdan Iorga is a surprisingly young tank commander who rose through the ranks on merit, after the fall of the Ceaucescu regime. He's a hick from the deepest part of the Carpathians, and the others look on him with some condescension, despite his obvious talent for strategy and organization.

Colonel Lucian Tarcu is the head of an elite paratrooper regiment. He's a bit of a megalomaniac and identifies a little too much with Death's Sting. The others let him into their circle because Death's Sting told them to, but they don't like or trust Colonel Tarcu. He struts about in an obsolete suit of Soviet power-armor and conducts himself like some kind of arch-villain, forever making pompous, hammy speeches and killing his underlings for trivial mistakes.

Lucian Tarcu was already recruiting a cult of new worshippers for Death's Sting within the ranks of his men when Radu Cozma and the Dragomir twins began plotting a coup. They found him and decided that, even though they had some reservations about his personality, it would be wise to bring him in on the plan. His cadre of "Blood-Drinkers," elite paratroopers who worship his terrible master, formed the initial core of their support. While they are supposed to be the group's inner cadre, no one else uses the Blood Drinkers as their personal bodyguards—they have too much loyalty to Colonel Tarcu for anyone else to fully trust them.

The four of them were instructed to seek out Marius Vladu, who was an ex member of Securitate, and who still had a lot of contacts among that fragmented Diaspora of former killers and secret policemen. He was also a ranking officer in the SRI, tasked with reporting disloyalty

among Romania's armed forces. This proved extremely useful when the day of the coup arrived. He used his influence in intelligence circles to conceal any hint of the imminent mutiny from the central authorities.

As the six of them moved to seize control of Transylvania's major urban centers, the Bucharest government was confused and slow to react. They did manage to send in Bogdan Iorga and the tank battalion under his command, but when his tanks rolled into Timisoara, he revealed himself as another secret servant of Death's Sting, and joined the mutineers. His men are extremely loyal to him, and most switched sides the moment they saw their beloved commander join the coup, bringing their heavy armored vehicles with hem. There isn't a lot of fuel available for the tanks, which mostly sit at major intersections and look menacing.

Now the area under the junta's control is run by a mixture of paratroopers, a few tanks, regular infantrymen and scary looking civilian paramilitary troops, who might be ex-Securitate, Colonel Vladu's SRI goons or Iron Guardsmen. Even though Securitate and the Iron Guard are traditional enemies, the cabal has held together so far. The coup is only a few weeks old by the time the PCs arrive and no one has begun to turn on anyone else yet. This state of affairs can't possibly last, but then again, it won't have to once Death's Sting wakes up and the whole country falls under his dark aegis.

The Blood Drinkers, the six members of the junta and a few dozen of their closest allies and bodyguards are all active members of the cult of Death's Sting. They have a few more adherents scattered through the ranks—any officer commanding one of the roadblocks on the road to Stegiocavar is certain to be a member, for example. The rank and file troops are not initiates, although this may change once Death's Sting comes down from the mountain to assume control of his new kingdom. If a PC encounters a member of the cult, let them make a Notice roll (DC 15) to spot a lapel pin that all the cultists wear. It bears a stylized version of the same emblem that Ken Cantrick wore on his ceremonial robes (see page 23 for a picture). Any really highly placed official of the new government is likely to have one.

The provisional government has its headquarters in Timisoara, at the palatial Hotel Ambassador. This opulent 4-star establishment is one of the few buildings in town that always has electricity. Its paneled halls, lush carpets and crystal chandeliers echo to the sound of booted feet. The whole complex is constantly swarming with men in uniform, most of whom seem to do little but lounge around looking tough. Sometimes they carve their names on the elegant old Victorian furniture or get drunk and shoot at the irreplaceable crystal chandeliers.

Marius Vladu, The Dragomir twins and their toady, Radu Cozma, can usually be found here, running their tiny empire from one of the hotel conference rooms. Bogdan Iorga prefers to remain in the field, living rough with his men, while Lucian Tarcu seldom leaves the tumbledown castle he has commandeered at Izgar (about twenty miles to the Southeast of Timisoara). There he surrounds himself with his Blood-Drinkers and a few sycophants, listening to the sound of his own voice as he rants about his glorious destiny. He attends meetings mostly by teleconference, and always hogs the floor when he does.

The scene at the hotel looks terribly disorganized and ill-run to most people who see it, and of course it is. It's also surprisingly easy to infiltrate, since no one keeps very good track of who is and isn't supposed to be there.

GM's Note: What, No Vampires?!

Transylvania is a strange place, home to many weird and unsettling legends. Is it the home of Count Dracula? Countess Elizabeth Bathory? A whole horde of undead blood-guzzling monstrosities? That depends on your campaign.

Because of his close association with horror comics (and his public domain status), Dracula has turned up in more than one superhero universe. Whether or not he's a major character in your game world is of course up to you. We've left the question completely open and unaddressed in this adventure, to allow you to fit it into your individual campaign more smoothly. The PCs won't be going anywhere near the Borghu Pass or Bistrittzia, where the Count is usually said to make his home, so you don't automatically have to introduce this plot wrinkle.

However, if there are vampires in Transylvania, the question immediately arises: how much do they know about Death's Sting? Are they in favor of his return, or opposed to it? Have they played some kind of a role in bringing him back, or are they planning an assault of their own on the castle to stop it? Are there multiple factions? Are any of them potential allies for the PCs or are they just another violent, unpredictable rogue factor like the Nazi Special Unit?

For that matter, what does the undead community make of the coup that has made Transylvania an independent state for the first time in five hundred years? Do they suspect that the coup's leaders are not what they seem? Do they even take an interest in the petty politics of the mortal world?

It would probably be a good idea to resolve these questions before you begin the scenario, because if your PCs already know that Transylvania is crawling with the minions of Count Dracula, they are going to assume that he's playing some kind of role in these events and they're probably going to seek him out on their own, either to bargain with or attack him. Best not to let a plot complication this big and disruptive get made up as you go along.

We hardly need to say that if you already have other major NPCs or organizations based in Romania, it would be a good idea to work out where they stand, too. In the event that you decide you need stats for a Transylvanian vampire or two, here's a set.

Generic Vampire

PL: 10

Str: 22 (+6) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** -- (n/a)
Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 10
Defense: 10 **Toughness Save:** 9 Impervious **Fortitude Save:** n/a **Reflexes Save:** 8 **Willpower Save:** 9

Skills: Bluff 11 (+14), Gather Information 4 (+7), Intimidate 8 (+12), Knowledge (Arcane Lore 4 (+8), Notice 8 (+13), Sense Motive 6 (+11), Stealth 8 (+11)

Feats: Distract, Fascinate, Fearless, Hide in Plain Sight, Move-By Action, Sneak Attack, Startle

Powers: Drain Constitution 2, Immunity 30 (Immune to all Fortitude effects), Insubstantial 2 (Assume Gaseous Form), Morph 2 (Can assume the form of a wolf or a bat; Flaw: Limited [Only works at night]), Protection 8 (Extras: Impervious; Flaw: Limited [vs. holy, silver, or magical weapons. See the description under "Drawbacks" to see what qualifies as "holy"], Mind Control 10 (Extras: Conscious, Mental Link), Regeneration 5 (Resurrection; Flaw: Limited [Does not work if he has been beheaded or impaled with a wooden stake]), Super-Movement 1 (Wall-Crawling), Super-Senses 3 (Darkvision, Acute Hearing)

Drawbacks: Weakness (dependant on blood, common, minor, -2pts.), Weakness (holy symbols, dazed for one round by losing an opposed Charisma check, common, moderate, -3 pts. Note: "Holy Symbol" is hereby defined as any symbol sacred to the bearer, and not consecrated to the gods of death), Weakness (Sunlight, minor, per round, destroyed after 12 rounds, -8 points) Vulnerable (to attacks from sharp stabbing weapons made of wood Common, Moderate, -3 pts)

CHAPTER FIVE: THE VILLAGE

The Ruins of Castle Bale

From Resita, it is a six-mile hike (on well-marked trails) to the village of Stegiocavar, the only inhabited settlement within a mile or so of the ruined Castle of Death's Sting. The village is a failed attempt at a tourist trap. A group of townsfolk, led by the enthusiastic and charismatic Ion Grigorescu, attempted to duplicate the prosperity of other Romanian towns and villages that are near the sites involved in either the life of Vlad the Impaler, or the novel *Dracula*, by playing up their proximity to the site of another gruesome medieval legend. Unfortunately, it hasn't worked out very well, if only because there aren't that many people interested in an obscure fairy tale like Death's Sting. As a result, the village is rather run down, with many decaying buildings and boarded-over windows.

Because of this, the villagers will greet apparent tourists with pleasure, especially if they show an interest in the ruins, and word about them will spread very quickly. Nearly everyone that the heroes meet will encourage them to tell their friends about the castle, they will be offered free drinks in the village's ramshackle pub, and so on. The villagers don't believe in the legend, of course, but they will enthusiastically ham it up. *("Oh no, you shouldn't even think about going near the castle at this hour. It is much too dark, and worse, the moon will be full tonight."*)

The villagers are serious about only going to the castle during daylight hours, but this is because they haven't installed any artificial lights in the castle. Everyone will do their best to be friendly to the PCs. While only about half of Stegiocavar's residents favored Ion Grigorescu's plan, now that it appears to be on the verge of working, no one will want to spoil it.

Adjusting the Challenge for Your PCs

We didn't really intend for this to be a combat scene. But if you want to add a fight, a group of ten soldiers (stats on Page 102) from the roadblocks turn up in town, hunting for the Player Characters. They are backed-up by two combat helicopters and perhaps the Romanian superhero called the White Eagle (see Page 100). The villagers won't dare to take sides in the ensuing fight.

Night of the Übersoldaten

Exactly twenty-four hours before the return of Death's Sting, the special unit of Nazi super-soldiers that was sent into the future in 1942 materializes in the center of the village. (If the heroes are in the village when this happens, they will witness the pyrotechnics of their arrival.) This happens at midnight, while most residents are asleep, except for a few drunken holdouts at the pub. The special unit immediately moves to seize control of the village, cutting phone lines, rounding up all the villagers and keeping them under close guard. Five of them remain here, while the other fifteen, including Obersturmfuhrer Rudolf Kurtz, will head for the ruins.

However, before they depart, Kurtz takes a few moments to interrogate some of the villagers about the current state of the world. He learns, much to his dismay, that the Reich fell six decades ago. This knowledge, when combined with Kurtz's ambitions, greatly influences the decisions that he makes throughout this scenario. He leaves his second-in-command as one of the guards on the villagers, as he correctly believes that the other man is utterly loyal to the Reich.

If the heroes don't reach the village until after the Special Unit arrives, these guards will attempt to capture them at gun point. If the heroes reveal their powers, the troopers will change tactics and attempt to kill them. (Remember, while all of the Special Unit troopers have the same stat block, they are not minions, and cannot be so easily dispatched.) If the heroes seem to be getting the upper hand, one of the troopers will radio Kurtz to ask for reinforcements. Kurtz will not send anyone, but he will be expecting the heroes to arrive at the castle, and act accordingly.

Adjusting the Challenge for Your PCs

If the Special Unit aren't tough enough as written to give your PCs a challenge, then arm three of them with crude Nazi-era energy weapons called "Blitzenschlaggers". A Blitzenschlagger is a bulky, backpack mounted weapon, prone to sudden malfunctions and much too heavy (200 pounds) for someone with normal strength to aim effectively in a firefight. Nothing more than a giant capacitor, it shoots a bolt of lightning for 12 electrical damage. If you don't want the Special Unit to have these weapons when they face death's Sting, then assume that they have all broken down or exhausted their charge by then. The weapon is prone to both failings.

STEGIOCAVAR IN MORE DEPTH

If you need more background detail on the village, here it is. Stegiocavar is a fairly typical mountain village, a bit smaller and more remote than average. Its most notable features are the castle which looms out from the rock face nearby, and the fact that the Nazi Wehrmacht came through the village once, back in 1942. No one knows what the Germans were doing here. Everyone stayed indoors and hid. The Germans left after occupying the village for less than 24 hours, just before dawn, without shooting, threatening, or for that matter interacting with anyone. Some older people swear that there were a lot of weird noises and lights out in the center of town on the night the Germans were here. Other people say that this is rubbish.

153 people live in and around Stegiocavar. Most are subsistence farmers, and raise goats and the occasional cow as a supplement to their fields. Most villagers have one or more small enterprises on the side—taking in sewing or washing for neighbors, making cheese or home-brewed alcohol, weaving or making baskets in hopes of selling them at the market down in Resita.

The town supports two shops, both of them cluttered establishments which sell anything the proprietor was able to get his or her hands on cheaply—sort of a combination general store, farmer's market and thriftshop. The larger of the two doubles as the town's post office and occasionally as its courtroom. The smaller one sells alcohol and doubles as the village's only pub.

A lot of young people have left in recent years and about one house in five is vacant, its windows boarded up. A general air of dusty neglect hangs over everything. It looks like the kind of place where you'd expect to see broken household appliances strewn on everybody's lawn, but everyone is too poor to afford them. Most houses are made of half-timbered wattle-and-daub, with a few more prosperous ones made from wood or brick.

The town is spread out over the surrounding slopes, with lots of farms hidden down long dirt driveways, but there is a rough kind of center, where older buildings cluster together around the church. This is the area which the map depicts. It contains both of the village's shops, and the deserted remains of the third one.

There is no mayor, or any other public official apart from the postmaster, who doubles as the owner of their largest shop. There are no public buildings unless the "post office" qualifies. Even in the center of the village there are no paved roads and the roads they do have are in very poor shape, deeply rutted, uneven, full of bumps and potholes. About half of the homes have telephone service. A few people bought cell phones from a salesman who came through last year, but the reception is terrible up here and the novelty of the gadgets is starting to wear off. Nearly every home has electricity, but nobody has running water. Drinking water comes from wells. Every house has a water pump and an outhouse. There are only two cars and three pickup trucks in the whole community, and they seldom run, since gas is expensive. Shepherds tend their flocks on horseback, most errands are done on foot. Three or four houses have television, as does the "pub", but reception is very poor and they can only get one channel—the state-run public station, which is usually quite dull. About half of the houses have radios, although radio reception is not good here either. Sometimes the store gets newspapers, or people bring them in after visiting bigger towns, but they tend to be weeks out of date.

The local citizens are aware that the coup has taken place and are anxious about what it will mean for their future—particularly in terms of the tourist trade. They know that there are roadblocks down

the mountain, but nobody has talked to the soldiers who man them. They don't know that the PCs aren't supposed to be here, but even if they did, they would probably just congratulate them on their ingenuity.

The biggest, newest building in town is the church, but the locals take little pride in it. Most people grumble quietly that the priest morally coerced everyone into helping him build it, and now he won't let anyone inside because he's afraid they'll mess it up. This is in fact true. Their priest holds most services outside the church, not because he's keeping anything sinister in there, but because he's cheap and wants to save on maintenance.

One enterprising local farmer bought an electric milking machine from a catalog, and now he charges his neighbors the equivalent of a few cents a day to use it. His barn is one of the best places to go in the village if you are looking for information, since many farmers gather here every morning at dawn to chat and gossip while they milk their cows.

There is no gas station. There was never enough demand for one to be commercially viable and their one attempt to build one ended in financial catastrophe for everyone involved.

No members of the cult of Death's Sting live in the village. Peasants are beneath his notice, so he never bothered to try recruiting any of them. None of them have had creepy dreams about the castle or something awful whispering to them from its depths, so almost none of them (with the exception of a few timid and/or superstitious folks like Ion Grigorescu) are actually afraid of the place, although they'll try to talk up how scary and haunted it supposedly is in front of the PCs. The Iron Guard has virtually no presence in Stegiocavar. There is only one member, and he's an old man who has no regular contact with the rest of the organization. Someone or other will eventually alert the authorities and the Guard to the fact that the PCs are here, but it won't happen for a few days.

As a general rule, people here are interested in foreigners, hopeful that they will stay and spend money, but too shy to approach them until someone else breaks the ice. Anyone from the outside will be immediately and visibly noticed by everyone, although the villagers won't look particularly hostile—just curious and perhaps a little nervous. None of them are really used to the social anxiety that comes with talking to strangers and they don't know how to deal with it. Once they've opened up, just about everybody will be eager to show the PCs how friendly they can be—even the folks who felt skeptical about attracting tourists won't want to risk messing things up now that the tourists are actually here.

We have a map of Stegiocavar for you on the next page, followed by descriptions of a number of important locations around the village. Use as much or as little of it as you would like. The PCs might spend a lot of time here and learn a lot about the local people and their individual back-stories or they might avoid the village altogether, depending on how the adventure goes. The GM should avoid the temptation to force them to spend extra time in Stegiocavar so as to be able to use the extra background material. If the PCs want to move on to the castle and the climactic fight, let them.

FOOTPATH 1
TO JANOS DODRESCU'S HUT
2.
10.
3.
SPOT WHERE THE SPECIAL TROOPERS MATERIALIZE
8.
1.
FOOTPATH 2
CHURCH
TO THE FORTRESS
6.
5.
9.
7.
4.
MAP GUIDE
1: VADIM'S STORE
2: MONDRAGON'S STORE
3: ION GRIGORESCU'S HOUSE
4: LAZLO JANOVICS' HOUSE
5: ABANDONED HOUSE #1
6: ABANDONED HOUSE #2
7: ABANDONED HOUSE #3
8: ABANDONED GAS STATION
9: NICOLAE BARBU'S HOUSE
10: ALEXANDRU POGOR'S HOUSE
FOOTPATH 3
TO THE ROADBLOCKS
MAP OF STEGIOCAVAR

Locations Around Stegiocavar

Here we have descriptions of everything named on the map above. The GM can of course invent more sites of interest around the village and isn't obliged to use any of these.

Footpaths 1, 2 and 3

If the Player Characters are trekking through the woods to avoid the roadblocks, they could arrive in the village on any one of these three wide, well-marked trails. Alternatively, a well-informed guide like Lazlo Janovics (see Page 70) or Janos Dodrescu (see Page 75) could lead the PCs down one of these paths to a smaller and less-used side trail that serves as a concealed shortcut to the fortress of Death's Sting (if, for example, they need to beat Kurtz and his Ubersoldaten there). Which trail leads to the castle is strictly up to GM—use whatever makes the most dramatic sense at the moment.

Vadim's Store

The largest and most successful business in Stegiocavar (which is not saying much) this store is full of used clothes and random odds and ends—whatever the proprietor could find cheap. It doubles as the town's post office and a battered postal service sign rest in one of the windows.

It is owned by Iancu Vadim, but he has become an invalid and the store is now effectively run by his cheery young wife, Iolanda. Although Iancu is officially the town's postmaster, he's too sick to actually perform his duties, so his wife unofficially serves in this role as well.

Because the shop sees little actual business, she spends most of her day gossiping with people who stop by.

There is no counter, just some mismatched tables piled with random merchandise. A set of scales and an ancient Soviet-made postage meter sit in one corner, next to a row of cubbyholes with people's names hand-lettered on them. There is a storeroom in back, full of boxes of various sizes and ages, along with a chair and small table piled up with papers, which Iolanda uses as her office. She lives upstairs with her husband and her teenage stepdaughter.

If the PCs walk into Vadim's store, everyone stops talking and looks at them blankly (they're not hostile, just shy and unsure how to welcome the PCs to Stegiocavar). A crowd of curious people begins to gather outside. If Lazlo Janovics has been following them (see page 70) he lurks anxiously in the street by the door.

Iolanda is the only one who looks unfazed. She gives the PCs a big friendly smile, welcomes them in her fractured English and starts asking them all sorts of questions about where they're from and what brings them here. Suddenly the tension in the room gives way and everyone joins in, relived that Iolanda has broken the ice. They eagerly want to know if the PCs are here to see the castle.

For more about Iolanda Vadim and the store she runs, see her individual description on Page 71.

Mondragon's Store

Stegiocavar's second largest business, this store doubles as its only pub. It is run by a thin, sour little man named Iosef Mondragon, who is perhaps the unfriendliest bartender in Eastern Europe. The place looks dubious from the outside. Its paint is peeling, two of its windows have been boarded over, the stairs leading up to the dingy front door look like they could collapse at any moment. See the illustration at the beginning of this chapter.

The interior of the store is a cluttered, unsanitary-looking mess. An improvised bar made of wooden planks on sawhorses occupies one side of the room. A door behind it leads to a small kitchen, a smaller storeroom, and the stairs to the cramped rooms overhead where Mondragon and his family live. Shelves and tables cluttered with random merchandise sit at random around the smoke-stained walls. The air is heavy with decades of cigarettes and stale food. There are no booths, but a dozen mismatched chairs hold local men and women, deep in talk. If strangers enter the pub, all conversation suddenly stops.

See Iosef Mondragon's individual description on Page 71 to see what kind of reception he gives them.

Ion Grigorescu's House

This little cottage is the home of the irrepressible Ion Grigorescu. He's a shepherd and a part-time auto mechanic and hasn't made a good living at either one. He lives here with his wife, his six-year old daughter and a half-disassembled engine block that he's been trying to put back together for months. Ion leads the faction of townspeople who want to turn the castle into a tourist attraction. His enthusiasm and charisma make up for his impractical nature, and he has won many people over to the idea. He will be very pleased to see the PCs in town and if they stay overnight he will offer them the (extremely) humble hospitality of his house.

Ion's wife, Helena, is getting sick of his foolhardy schemes and nags him quite a bit about his lack of financial success. She is a basically decent person and will do her best to be a good hostess, although it will immediately be obvious to the PCs that there isn't enough room for even one extra person to stay with them or enough food to serve a guest at dinner. She saves her nagging for Ion, and even though she is exhausted, she will be unfailingly polite to her guests.

For more about Ion Grigorescu, see his individual description on Page 69.

Lazlo Janovics' House

Small, squalid and overcrowded, this little two-room house is home to Lazlo Janovics, his wife and his big scowling sons. It is one of the few homes in the village that doesn't have electricity.

You can see that it's a house full of boys the moment you walk though it's sagging door. The Janovics boys have written and carved things on the walls so often that their mother's best efforts still aren't able to get rid of the marks entirely. Their possessions lie in a tangled heap across the floor of their room. The only other chamber serves as a dining room, living room and bedroom for the adults. The stove is over in one corner. For more information about Lazlo Janovics and the ways in which he may be able to help the Player Characters, see his individual description on Page 70.

Abandoned House #1

This sad little house was abandoned about a year ago. Its roof and walls are still in good shape (toughness 5). The windows have all been broken and the interior is filthy, but with a little work someone else could easily move in. The house has two rooms. A battered, moldy couch lies in the front room and a wooden box-bed with no mattress is in the back. Anyone reaching into the fireplace is in for a nasty surprise. It's full of spiders and one bites them on the hand. Anyone with any Impervious Protection can of course ignore this.

Getting bitten may give the PC a tense moment, but in fact no seriously venomous spiders are native to Romania. Unless they are unfortunate enough to be allergic to spider bites, it just hurts.

Abandoned House #2

The largest house in the village, it was once home to a large and prosperous farming family, but they have all either moved away or died and no one has taken over the property. A rambling, uneven building that looks as though it was thrown together out of mismatched parts, the owners added to it as the family grew and building materials became available. Now it's deserted and desolate, its rooms empty, its sprawling wings silent. It has lain vacant for more than ten years now and everything of value left inside has long since been carried off by the neighbors. Even the doors are missing. Gaps are visible in the roof and the floor is so badly water damaged that parts of the house will probably never be habitable again. The smell of mold hangs over everything.

This would be a good place to hide when the Ubersoldaten come to town, but it's difficult to find your way around inside in the dark. The floors are all built at different levels and it's easy to trip over them (Reflexes Save vs. DC 10 to do it without

stumbling in the dark). The main supports in the lower-left wing have been rotted nearly through. Anyone who punches a hole in one of the Toughness 4 walls here will bring the ceiling down on themselves and anyone else in the room. This does 3 damage and may leave them trapped, at the GM's discretion. A Reflexes Save vs. DC 15 will allow them to evade the collapsing roof, but only if they use a Movement Action to vacate the room.

There is enough debris lying around in the yard outside that anyone looking for an improvised weapon can find a chunk of wood or concrete that will do 3 damage with a Notice Check vs. D10. It takes only one Standard Action to look.

Abandoned House #3

One of the few two-story houses in Stegiocavar, now fallen to rack and ruin. It's been deserted for years and its floors and roof are starting to sag. This house was better constructed than some, however, and it's in no danger of actually caving in, although there are places where (at the GM's discretion) the floor will let out ominous noises and shift a little under their feet.

All Stealth rolls are made at a -2 penalty on this house's creaky upper floor and groaning stairs, unless the character making the role has some kind of superpower that the GM feels would reasonably let them get around this problem (levitation, for example, or the power to become immaterial or dampen sounds).

There are two large and one small downstairs rooms, with shadowy open doorways leading between them. No furniture or appliances are left in the house, but from the grease and smoke stains on the walls it seems clear that the little room was once the kitchen. An enclosed staircase leads up to the second floor, which has two rooms and a short hallway between them.

A rag doll lies in the corner of one upstairs room. It's an eerie, ugly sight, covered with dirt, its painted facial features obliterated by mildew into blankness. The doll isn't haunted, but it could give a jumpy Player Character a turn.

On the wall behind the doll, a child has scribbled a face with a pen. It's hard to tell if it's the face of a person or an animal. It looks happy, or perhaps full of vindictive glee. There is nothing evil or supernatural about this either, it's just the fading relic of someone's long-vanished childhood.

Abandoned Gas Station

Stegiocavar's one gas station failed for lack of business a few years back. This was a particularly bitter pill for Ion Grigorescu, who had hoped to become its resident auto mechanic, once sales picked up. It was owned by a consortium of local farmers and shepherds and represented the most ambitious project in the village since the construction of Vadim's store. No one got their investment back and Ion Grigorescu lost most of his meager savings.

Untended and overgrown, the building is beginning to fall apart. It has no windows left and its door hangs crookedly off the hinges. The corrugated iron shelter for cars to park under is rusted through, but the posts holding it up at the corners are still strong. It never had any actual gas pumps—the owners could never have afforded them, let alone the cost of a big underground tank. Instead it had a little tank on stilts with a nozzle and hose attached. The tank is long gone, reclaimed by its original owner.

Inside the building are three rooms. A front area where the gas station attendant would sit and collect money, a back room where spare parts and merchandise could be stored and a small room at the very back for the attendant to sleep in, if the owners were ever able to find a full-time employee. Nothing remains in any of the rooms, apart from a set of shelves built into the back wall of the storeroom.

The building is fairly sound, despite having been hastily constructed and then abandoned for years. The exterior walls are Toughness 5 and the roof is Toughness 3. The overhanging shelter in the carport is Toughness 3, and if damaged it will fall on whatever is underneath it (2 damage, which can be evaded by making a Reflexes Save Vs. DC 10, but the Save automatically fails if

the character doesn't have any Move Actions left, or for some other reason fails to move out from under the falling sheet of rusty metal). The posts which hold it up are as thick as telephone poles and still have a Toughness of 5.

The floor in the storeroom is failing. If anything with more than a combined weight of 500 pounds is placed anywhere on the floor, it will groan ominously and there is a ½ chance that it will collapse into the three-foot crawlspace underneath. If someone is standing on the floor when it gives way, they can make a Reflexes Save vs. DC 15 to avoid falling through and taking 2 damage. As with the car-shelter outside, they can only evade falling through the floor if they have a Move Action left in the round and if they spend it on getting out of the room (the GM can make special exceptions for PCs who can fly or levitate), if this seems appropriate.

Nicolae Barbu's House

This big, crowded house is the home of Nicolae Barbu, Stegiocavar's second oldest resident. A loud and outrageous old character, he is the village's only remaining Stalinist. He lives here with his equally cantankerous wife, his granddaughter and six of his great-grand-children. Despite the cramped conditions in this house, his granddaughter manages to keep it remarkably free of grime and dust.

To find out more about the big-hearted, loudmouthed old Mr. Barbu, see his individual description on Page 72.

Alexandru Pogor's House

One look at this disorderly little house and you will guess that an old man lives here alone. Everything is falling into decay; the house is cluttered with rubbish that Mr. Pogor isn't strong enough to carry away, crammed with odds and ends he has accumulated, and coming apart from repairs he isn't strong enough to make.

As Stegiocavar's oldest resident, you might think Alexandru Pogor's neighbors might pitch in and help him out, but his unpleasant personality and history of cheating people keeps them away. Despite being a mean old curmudgeon, he'll act friendly to any PCs who approach his house—he gets really lonely when he isn't at the pub. His love of fascism may put the PCs off and he can't help talking about it. For more about this nasty old man and his long feud with Nicolae Barbu, see his individual description on Page 73.

The Church

Odd-looking and eccentric in is construction, with an extremely unclerical looking tarpaper roof, this is nonetheless the newest and strongest building in the village. Father Simion Vulpes inherited a crumbling, run-down church when he moved here, and made it his first order of business to browbeat his new parishioners into building him a new one. Everyone in town chipped in and helped him build the new church, but they still resent him for it.

The resulting structure has cinderblock walls (Toughness 8) that have been painted brown to resemble wood. Its big metal doors are Toughness 5, and are normally kept locked. The roof is tarpaper, since they couldn't afford shingles, and has a Toughness of only 2.

Father Simion lives in his strange church, in a room behind his vestry that doubles as the church office. He doesn't have enough money for maintenance and seldom lets his flock inside, for fear that they will put wear and tear on the building. On all but the holiest (or coldest) of days he holds services outside and keeps the church's sturdy doors locked tight. This causes even more resentment, particularly when it rains.

Sample Villagers

Here are some folks you can use to populate the village of Stegiocavar. We have a generic villager and a bunch of individual personalities you can use to add extra color.

Generic Villager

PL: 1

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 10 (+1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 1

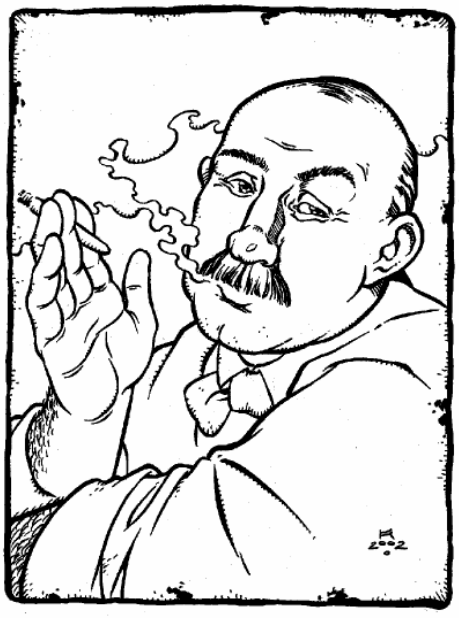
Defense: 1 (+ Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 1 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Bluff 2 (+2), Climb 2 (+3), Craft (Structural) 2 (+2), Diplomacy 2 (+2), Handle Animal 6 (+6), Notice 4 (+4), Profession (Shepherd or Farmer) 6 (+6), Second Profession (Shepherd, Farmer or Merchant) 4 (+4), Ride 4 (+4), Sense Motive 2 (+2), Stealth 2 (+2), Survival 4 (+4)

Feats: Connected (owed at least a few favors around the village by everybody), Track

Background: Here are some stats for a standard villager. He (or she) is probably a shepherd, a farmer or a housewife, spends a lot of time outdoors, can ride a horse and knows the vicinity around Stegiocavar intimately well. Any one of these folks could guide the PCs to the castle, at the GM's discretion. Shy around strangers, they are nonetheless eager to welcome the PCs (and their money) to their village. We have some individual personalities listed below, although you are not of course obligated to use any of them.

Ion Grigorescu



PL: 2

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)

Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 2
Defense: 2 (+ Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Bluff 5 (+7), Craft (Structural) 2 (+2), Craft (Mechanical) 6 (+7), Diplomacy 5 (+7), Handle Animal 2 (+2), Notice 6 (+6), Profession (Shepherd) 2 (+2), Second Profession (Auto Mechanic) 7 (+7), Ride 4 (+4), Sense Motive 5 (+5), Stealth 2 (+2), Survival 2 (+2)

Feats: Connected, Improvised Tools

Complications: Superstitious, not very brave unless his family is at risk.

Background: A loud, happy, enthusiastic man with an improbable taste for British hair bands from the 1980s, he's western Transylvania's only fan of "A Flock of Seagulls". Much more friendly than his neighbors toward outsiders, he's always talking about developing the castle as a tourist attraction. Some people aren't so sure about the wisdom of doing this, but he has plenty of supporters.

The moment he sees the PCs in town he will eagerly approach them and ask if they're here to see the castle. If they say yes, then instead of offering to guide them there, he will call as many other people as possible around and explain to them that this is the first group of tourists here to see the castle, and that his Internet ad must have worked (he posted a tiny blurb on a Geocities travel site from a public library in Resita last year). Surely now everyone can see that he is right! Then he'll start asking the PCs about A Flock of Seagulls , the Thompson Twins and other large-haired euro-bands from the same distant epoch. He finds it impossible to understand that no one listens to these groups anymore and won't believe the PCs if they tell him. A cheerful fellow, he won't take rejection to heart and will continue to act cheery and talkative toward the PCs even if they try to chase him off. Doing anything really cruel or humiliating to him in public brings the whole town's disapproval down on the PCs.

No mountaineer, Ion is one of the few people in the village who is actually scared of the castle, and he won't want to

guide the PCs there himself. He could probably talk someone else into it, however.

Ion is a classic Transylvanian mountain man. Somewhere past forty, he is short, dark, muscular and heavy, with a big black moustache and a jaunty Tyrolean hat. He is also wears an ancient, faded Duran Duran t-shirt on special occasions. He doesn't like them as much as the other bands, but it was as close to a shirt for A Flock of Seagulls as he could find. Ion is a shepherd by trade, but he's not very good at it and his wife yells at him a lot about money. A competent auto mechanic, there aren't enough cars in town for him to make a living at it. To make business even worse, he loves fixing cars so much that he's often willing to do it for free.

He has a pretty little six year old daughter named Maria and he would do anything at all to protect her or to placate his nagging bride.

A superstitious fellow, afraid of ghosts and spooky places like the castle (just because he wants tourists to come see it doesn't mean that he'd willingly go there himself) he will discover a deep well of bravery within himself if his little family is ever threatened.

Lazlo Janovics
PL: 2

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 2 **Defense:** 2 (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 3
Fortitude Save: 3 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 1

Skills: Climb 4 (+7), Craft (Structural) 4 (+4), Handle Animal 8 (+7), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (Shepherd) 7 (+7), Second Profession (Farmer) 4 (+4), Ride 6 (+7), Sense Motive 2 (+3), Stealth 6 (+7), Survival 6 (+7)
Feats: Animal Empathy, Connected, Track
Complications: Shy, stubborn, extremely loyal
Background: A large, ferocious-looking man with a thick moustache, a missing front tooth and an enormous wide-brimmed hat, he will follow the PCs at a distance, scowling. He wants very much to welcome them to his village, but he's too shy to approach them and when he gets anxious, he scowls. The reason he's following the PCs is that he wants to work up his nerve to talk to them, welcome them, make them understand that he's glad to see tourists, but he just can't seem to force himself to speak to them.

If the PCs appear to notice him and react with dismay or hostility, it will make him even more anxious and he'll scowl even more fiercely. Totally harmless unless provoked, he is prone to worry, and so he scowls a lot. Everyone in his home village has known him from childhood, knows that this is just his way, and so they don't realize how threatening he might look to outsiders. Get to know him and you'll find that he is sentimental, easily moved to tears, stubborn, and extremely loyal. His voice sounds quiet and vaguely sheepish, when he speaks, which isn't often. He was a skeptic about Ion Grigorescu's plan to entice tourists to Stegiocavar, and now that they've come he feels ashamed of having doubted Ion and wants to do whatever he can to help.

Lazlo is the town's only ethnic Hungarian. Up in the mountains, a lot of people don't like Hungarians, but here in Stegiocavar everyone knows that Lazlo is okay (if a bit stubborn and quirky). He worries that people might think he's trying to hide his Hungarian heritage, so he goes out of his way to act and dress as stereotypically Hungarian as possible, which is why he wears a furry vest and wide-brimmed Magyar hat in all weather, whether or not it makes sense to.

He is known for getting odd notions in his head and stubbornly fixating on them. But he's a competent, capable shepherd who rides well and knows the upper slopes intimately. He fears the castle a bit, but if the PCs ask him to guide them there he will do his best. In some obscure way that only makes sense to him, he feels that this makes up for his having doubted Ion Grigorescu. He lives with his wife and three large, scowling, ill-kempt sons in a crowded shepherd's hut near the edge of town.

Iolanda Vadim

PL: 1

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 1
Defense: 1 (+1 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 2 **Fortitude Save:** 2 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Bluff 4 (+6), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Gather Information 3 (+5), Handle Animal 2 (+4), Notice 4 (+4), Perform (Dance) 4 (+6), Profession (Shopkeeper) 6 (+6), Ride 2 (+2), Sense Motive 4 (+6)

Feats: Connected (owed favors around the village), Contacts (within her native village only)

Background: Since her husband Iancu was incapacitated by a heart attack ten years ago, Iolanda Vadim has done her best to run his shop by herself. It's the biggest, most successful store in the village, which I fear is not saying very much. In many little villages like Stegiocavar, the proprietor of the town's largest business effectively becomes its leader. But Iolanda is still a fairly young woman, and has a reputation for being easygoing and unserious, so no one really looks to her for leadership. Anyway her husband is still technically the owner of the shop and the town postmaster, even though she actually performs both of those jobs, which puts her status in an odd kind of limbo. People still call it "Iancu's Store."

Poor Iancu himself spends most of his time lying in his bed upstairs, listening to the radio. His fourteen year old daughter Nicoleta looks after him, leaving her stepmother to handle the business. It's not very taxing work, since there isn't a lot of mail to process or a lot of merchandise to sell. Iolanda spends much of her time behind the counter gossiping with neighbors and friends, of whom she has quite a few.

She is about thirty-three, good looking, but starting to get plump. Outgoing, she smiles a lot and wants to know everybody's personal history. She is bored with life in her village, but lacks ambition and has no serious plans to leave. Anyway she could never abandon her poor invalid husband. Not very strong-willed, she has no appetite for danger and will throw a hysterical panic if threatened. Her relations with her stepdaughter are easy and informal. She doesn't expect the girl to think of her as a mother and doesn't try to act like one. They're more like friendly roommates.

If the PCs haven't yet met Ion Grigorescu, then it is Iolanda who breaks the ice and welcomes them to Stegiocavar. The moment they walk into her store, a curious crowd of locals gathers around, all of them eager to welcome the outsiders but unsure how to start. Iolanda smiles at the PCs, makes friendly conversation, asks them lots of nosy questions and then everyone joins in.

Iosif Mondragon

PL: 1

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 13 (+1) **Wis:** 11 (+0) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 1
Defense: 1 (+1 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 2 **Fortitude Save:** 1 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Bluff 4 (+3), Craft (Structural) 5 (+6), Drive 6 (+6), Gather Information 3 (+2), Handle Animal 2 (+1), Intimidate 1 (+0), Knowledge (History) 1 (+2), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 1

(+2), Notice 4 (+4), Perform (Oratory) 1 (+0), Profession (Shopkeeper) 3 (+4), Ride 2 (+2), Sense Motive 1 (+1)
Complications: Grumbler, has poor judgment, can't keep his unpopular opinions to himself.
Background: A drab, skinny, stoop-shouldered man with a great unruly shock of white hair, he always looks like he has been sucking on something unpleasant for an hour or so. People debate when they last saw him smile. He lives with his loutish, alcoholic teenage son over the shop/pub he owns. As the owner and proprietor of Stegiocavar's second-largest business and its only pub, Iosif Mondragon would also seem to be a natural leader for the village. But he has personal problems that prevent him from assuming that role. Constantly bitter and sour, forever muttering under his breath, he lacks personal charm. He's also regarded as a crazy eccentric by his customers and neighbors. An outspoken, opinionated man, he doesn't believe in God and doesn't care who hears him say so. He's the village's only healthy adult male who doesn't attend church services. He's also something of a pseudo-intellectual, forever misquoting Kant and Voltaire, getting mixed-up notions about philosophy and the great books that make no sense, but which no one cares to debate him over. He's also notoriously gullible, and everyone in town has some outrageous story about his bad judgment.

At first he was one of Ion Grigorescu's strongest supporters, and firmly believed that tourism was the key to reviving the village economy. Then last fall Ion talked him into investing in a couple of big boxes worth of cheap souvenirs—badly produced pens, key-chains, tote bags and paperweights with Stegiocavar's name and a picture of the castle on them. He even had a few baseball caps and tee-shirts made up. No one bought a single one of these items, which sit in their dusty cardboard boxes behind the counter/bar, a constant source of disgruntlement to Iosif. He has become very bitter about the whole thing (even more bitter than usual, people note with wonderment) and has violently rejected the idea that the tourists will ever come. This has actually made the concept more popular, since if Mondragon opposes it, the odds are that it must be a good idea.

If the PCs walk into his pub he will act at first startled, then silent and scowling, and then, as curious patrons gather around to get a look at the PCs and perhaps work their nerve up to welcome them to the village, Iosif will break into an enormous grin and start telling the PCs how glad he is to see them and how he hopes they're enjoying their stay. He'll begin rummaging around in the cardboard boxes for some souvenirs to give them, free of charge. He doesn't know how to be nice to people and is awkward and overbearing in his efforts to make friends, but a crowd of his patrons soon joins in and everyone wants to buy the PCs drinks.

Nicolae Barbu
PL: 1

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** 10 (+0) **Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: -1 **Attack Bonus**: 1
Defense: 0 **Toughness Save:** 0
Fortitude Save: 0 **Reflexes Save:** -1
Willpower Save: 0

Skills: Bluff 4 (+6), Craft (Structural) 6 (+6), Diplomacy 4 (+6), Handle Animal 6 (+6), Knowledge (History) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+4), Profession (Farmer) 6 (+6), Second Profession (Soldier) 2 (+2), Sense Motive 4 (+4), Survival 4 (+4)
Feats: Connected, Skill Mastery (Craft, Farmer, Handle Animal, Survival) Track
Complications: Ardent Communist. Loves being the center of attention.
Background: Stegiocavar's second oldest resident, and its only surviving Communist. This wizened old curmudgeon may be the only human being in a thirty mile radius who openly yearns for the days of the Ceaucescu regime. He is forever carrying on about his village's economic decline, the way young people disrespect everyone today and the glorious rise of Socialism. He is aware that people say everyone suffered terribly under Romania's late dictator, but he claims that most of the bad things said about

Ceaucescu are lies, spread by fascists. Does he really believe this? Not entirely, but he hates Alexandru Pogor, the town's only fascist, with a passion and enjoys getting into arguments with him. After decades of feuding over various petty matters, the two old men have grown accustomed to their bickering and carry it on as much because they are used to it and people expect it of them as because of any genuine animosity they might feel.

Nicolae lives in a big house near the center of town with his wife, his grand-daughter and six great-grandchildren. He's pretty immature for an eighty-year-old and loves getting attention with all sorts of childish theatrics. He's sentimental and softhearted underneath his bluster and sometimes impulsively does people big favors that he can't really afford.

Despite being a Communist, he attends church every week, just like everyone else, and he's one of the few people in town who publicly supports their unpopular priest (partly because he can't stand to see people get picked on and partly out of sheer willful perversity). He goes down to the pub nearly every night, and if he sees the PCs there he's sure to pick a quarrel with Alexandru Pogor, so that he can be the center of attention.

Alexandru Pogor
PL: 1

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 8 (-1) **Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 1
Defense: 1 (+1 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save: -**1 **Fortitude Save:** -1 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 1

Skills: Bluff 4 (+5), Craft (Structural) 4 (+4), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Handle Animal 4 (+5), Intimidate 4 (+5), Notice 5 (+6), Profession (Farmer) 6 (+6), Second Profession (Merchant) 4 (+4), Sense Motive 5 (+6), Survival 5 (+6)
Feats: Connected, Taunt, Track
Complications: Ardent fascist. Petty, cruel, loves getting the better of other people.
Background: Stegiocavar's oldest resident, and its only practicing member of the dreaded Iron Guard, now that his sons and grandsons have moved away to a bigger town. Unlike most members of the Iron Guard, he makes no secret of his membership or of his love of fascism. He's forever carrying on in public about the superiority of the Romanian race and the evils of communism. He openly admires Hitler and Mussolini and will say so to anyone unlucky enough to get cornered by him. He claims to hate Jews, although he has never met any, and despises Hungarians. He can cite all kinds of imaginary and improbable atrocities that the Hungarian Army committed when they invaded Rumania in World War Two. He seems unaware of the fact that they invaded his country at Hitler's request, and it's useless to try to tell him this. Yet despite his hatred of Hungarians, he is careful to let everyone know that he thinks Lazlo Janovics is okay, and goes out of his way to be friendly to the man, who ignores his overtures out of shyness.

Mr. Pogor likes to present himself as a harmless old loudmouth, but underneath his bluster he is genuinely malicious, petty and spiteful. He actually has most people fooled into thinking he's just an old blowhard, unless they've had business dealings with him and gotten ripped off. He has no regular contact with the Iron Guard and does not know who he would report the PCs' presence to if he had any desire to inform on them. In fact he doesn't—he's eager to see tourists come to his village and would like the PCs to see him as a colorful local character who adds to the place's charm. It does not occur to him that they might be offended by his fascist posturing, although if he senses that any of them might be members of ethnic groups that he despises, he will go out of his way to reassure them that he thinks they're all right—exceptions to the general rule.

He has lived alone since his wife died, in a small house with no telephone or electricity. He's too old to take proper care of things and the place is beginning to fall apart despite occasional efforts by his neighbors to help him out. He spends most nights at the pub, for he gets lonely and

afraid when he's at home by himself. He's so out of touch that he doesn't know that the coup was carried out with the Iron Guard's cooperation and if he is asked about this he will angrily deny it.

Father Simion Vulpes

PL: 2

Str: 10 (+0)	**Dex:** 10 (+0)	**Con:** 10 (+0)
Int: 14 (+2)	**Wis:** 10 (+0)	**Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 0	**Attack Bonus**: 1	
Defense: 2 (+2 Flatfooted)	**Toughness Save:** 0	**Fortitude Save:** 0 **Reflexes Save:** 0 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Craft (Structural) 2 (+4), Drive 6 (+6), Gather Information 4 (+3), Intimidate 1 (+0), Knowledge (History) 4 (+6), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 4 (+6), Notice 6 (+6), Perform (Oratory) 1 (+0), Profession (Priest) 3 (+4), Sense Motive 2 (+2)

Complications: Petty, shortsighted.

Background: Stegiocavar's priest is not popular with his parishioners. A high-strung, humorless young man from Cluj, he was unpopular at Seminary, thanks to his brittle, condescending manner, and even less popular with his first set of parishioners, so the church sent him here, to the most obscure nook they could find. He believes himself to be better educated than his flock, and it shows. He also can't grow much of a proper beard, and people regard this as inappropriate for a priest.

He is the village's first priest in some years, and when he arrived, his rectory was unlivable and his church was falling apart. For two years he lived with Iosif Mondragon's family while he tried to get local people to assist him in building a new church and residence for free. He succeeded, in getting them to do this, at the cost of much of their good will. And he wasn't an easy roommate for Iosif, who actually decided to become an atheist, just because he resented Father Simion so much. It was a difficult position to be in. If he stayed with the Mondragon family, he looked like a freeloader. If he encouraged people to help build his residence faster, tit looked like he was feathering his own nest at everyone else's expense.

Nor did his troubles end when the church was finally finished and fit for human habitation. He now had a brand-new church, but no funds with which to keep it maintained. He's grown paranoid about wear and tear on his church, and rarely lets anyone inside, holding most services outdoors on the church's lawn. He greatly resents rain, and sometimes delays services for an hour or more while he waits for the sky to clear up so that he won't have to let his parishioners inside. On doctrinal matters he is conservative and intolerant, and is very keen to stamp out rural superstitions.

He is convinced that Iosif Mondragon must be poisoning the other townsfolk against him, and he's so shortsighted that he fails to grasp the fact that no one ever listens to Mondragon's opinions. The man is even more unpopular than he is. Petty by nature, Father Simion spends most of his time worrying about the church and how to keep it from deteriorating with his limited funds.

Even when the Special Unit comes to Stegiocavar, his first thought will be to keep anyone from getting their muddy boots inside his church. This could get him killed,

or could lead him to deny sanctuary to someone who tries to hide in his church (if the PCs point out to him that he's being ridiculous, he'll suddenly snap out of it and apologize).

Janos Dodrescu
PL: 5

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 5 **Attack Bonus**: 5 **Defense:** 5 (3 flatfooted) (+2 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 5 (+3 Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 5 **Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 5

Skills: Climb 4 (+6), Handle Animal 8 (+7), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (Shepherd) 7 (+7), Second Profession (Soldier) 4 (+4), Ride 6 (+7), Stealth 7 (+9), Survival 7 (+9), Swim 4 (+6)
Feats: Animal Empathy, Defensive Roll 2, Dodge Focus 2, Equipment 1 (5pts of equipment), Improved Aim, Improved Critical (with Hunting Rifle), Improved Initiative, Sneak Attack, Track
Equipment: Hunting Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage)
Complications: Has post-traumatic stress disorder, finds it difficult to be around people for long.
Background: One of the few local boys who joined the Romanian Army, he was asked to fire on a crowd of demonstrators during the 1989 revolution and he was never quite the same again afterwards. Once he left the military he came home to the village where he grew up, but shunned his family and former friends. Now he lives alone in a shack on a slope above the village, nursing his post-traumatic stress disorder, unable to be around people for any length of time. His parents have died, his brother has left town and his few remaining childhood friends have long since given up on him.

Everyone knows he's there, herding his goats and eking out a living by himself, but it's a disturbing topic so people don't talk much about him. If a PC asks about the lone hut, people will look embarrassed and explain that a hermit lives there, that he got a little messed-up in the army and doesn't like to be around people much anymore. Then they look sad and change the subject.

He loves the mountains, loves the forest, and knows the woods and slopes around Stegiocavar better than anyone alive. He spends as much time as possible out in nature, away from people, slowly healing his wounded mind. If the PCs approach his hut and ask him to guide them to the castle, he will be silent but polite, and will help them without a word. He knows every possible way to get there, including lots of trails that no one else knows about. If the PCs are trying to beat Kurtz and his Special Unit to the castle, they could have no better guide.

Janos is a good shot and as stealthy as a cat. He has an illegal, unlicensed hunting rifle stored in his shack, which he uses to supplement his meager diet of goat-cheese with the occasional squirrel or rabbit. If the Ubersoldaten start herding his former neighbors up like cattle, he may go hide in the forest or he may start sniping at Kurtz' men—it's up the GM. Please note that it's harmful to his fragile state of mind for him to shoot at another human being again. Make the PCs aware of this if they enlist his aid.

Special Unit Troopers

PL: 8

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 20 (+5) **Int:** 6 (-4) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 8
Defense: 8 (+8 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 8 (5 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 8 **Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Notice 7 (+6), Profession (soldier) 12 (+8), Stealth 3 (+4)
Feats: Chokehold, Fearless, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple
Powers: Device (Body Armor [+3 Toughness]), Impervious Toughness 5, Super-Senses 2 (Acute Hearing, Low-Light Vision), Regeneration 5 (Checks to recover from being Injured after one Standard Action worth of rest) Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 2,800 pounds)
Note on Powers: The GM is free to decide that the process which created the Special Troopers didn't affect them all in precisely the same way. Some of the individualized troopers listed below have slightly different powers and drawbacks from the others.
Equipment: Gas Mask (Immunity to gas and poison attacks), Goggles (Sensory Shield 5 vs. Visual Dazzle Attacks), Semiautmoatic Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage), Bayonet (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), 3 "Potato Masher" Fragmentation Grenades (do 8 Damage to anything in a 15 foot radius)
Complications: Blindly follows orders like a robot.
Drawbacks: Disability (color-blind) 1 pt, Disability (can no longer speak any human language) 4pts, Disability (hideously mutated) 1pt, Moderate Vulnerability (to Mind Control) 4pts.
Background: While we have some individualized troopers listed below in case you would like to make the Unit less homogenous, most of them fit this generic template. The troopers are all around six feet in height, and of average weight. Their faces are entirely concealed by their masks, which is fortunate as they are they often hideously deformed—just one of the unpleasant side-effects of the chemical treatments that gave them their powers. Those treatments also damaged their brains, rendering them something both more and less than human. They also wiped away any memories the Troopers had of their previous lives, turning them into ruthless and emotionless "perfect" soldiers. They do nothing but follow orders, although some show flashes of initiative in combat. Except for their commander, they don't speak, and communicate through hand gestures and a few bestial grunts. A few are sometimes troubled by sudden, meaningless fragments of memory from their pasts. See the individual descriptions for more details.

The treatments gave each of the Troopers superhuman strength and increased resilience. They wear specially-designed armor that incorporates advanced (for the 1940s) life-support gear, intended to protect them from chemical weapons. They each carry a heavy rifle, a few fragmentation grenades and a "long knife" (effectively a sword) for close combat. Their one weakness is a high degree of susceptibility to telepathic influence.
Tactics: Highly trained professional commandoes, the Special Unit troopers don't remember much about their lives, but they do remember how to be soldiers. They will employ cover to make sniping attacks, attempt to flank, and shoot from behind. They try to maintain a fifteen-foot distance from one another when they fight and to overlap their fields of fire. If at all possible, they will attempt to concentrate their fire on the target from different directions. If their commander is not present, it will become difficult for them to adapt to unexpected tactics from their opponents.

Some Individual Special Troopers
The Special Unit really is a group of faceless killing machines. If however the GM wants to add a few individuals to their ranks, or needs a personality and background for one who (for example) gets captured and subjected to a psychic probe by one of the PCs, here are four of them.

Johan Wurmer

PL: 8

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 20 (+5)
Int: 8 (-2) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 8
Defense: 8 (+8 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 8 (5 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 8 **Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Craft (Electronics) 1 (+2), Notice 8 (+7), Profession (Radio Operator) 5 (+4), Profession (soldier) 12 (+9), Stealth 3 (+4)
Feats: Chokehold, Fearless, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple
Powers: Device (Body Armor [+3 Toughness]), Impervious Toughness 5, Super-Senses 2 (Acute Hearing, Low-Light Vision), Regeneration 5 (Checks to recover from being Injured after one Standard Action worth of rest) Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 2,800 pounds)
Equipment: Gas Mask (Immunity to gas and poison attacks), Goggles (5pt Sensory Shield against Visual Dazzle Attacks), Semiautmoatic Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage), Bayonet (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), 3 "Potato Masher" Fragmentation Grenades (do 8 Damage to anything in a 15 foot radius), Bulky Portable Radio
Complications: Blindly follows orders like a robot.
Drawbacks: Disability (color-blind) 1 pt, Disability (can no longer speak any human language) 4pts, Disability (hideously mutated) 1pt, Moderate Vulnerability (to Mind Control) 4pts.
Background: Wurmer is the team's radio operator. He's a little smarter and retains more chunks of his past than most of the other Special Troopers, although he looks just as horrible under his mask. He's also the youngest of them—just eighteen years old. His radio is pretty well useless here in the future, with no High Command to contact, but he carries it all the same.

Fascinated by radio and electronic devices since early childhood, if he is ever left to himself (and not ordered to the contrary) he will attempt to disassemble his radio or any other electronic device that he sees and then examine each of the parts, staring at them and rearranging them as though they meant something important. Something that he can't quite recall. Wurmer remembers big chunks of his childhood in Munich and his quiet, distant father who taught him all about radio, but he is untroubled by these flashes of his past and finds them comforting.

Kurtz knows about Wurmer's brain-damaged passion for taking electronic things apart, and has ordered him not to touch the time machine. He will have to reverse the order first if he needs Wurmer to bring it to him or help him operate it. This could become seriously inconvenient if they try to

use the time machine in the middle of a fight with Death's Sting (see page 93).

Erik Stern

PL: 8

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 20 (+5)
Int: 6 (-4) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 4 (-3)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 8
Defense: 8 (+8 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 8 (5 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 8 **Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Notice 8 (+8), Profession (soldier) 10 (+6), Stealth 4 (+7), Survival 8 (+8)
Feats: Chokehold, Fearless, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Tracking
Powers: Device (Body Armor [+3 Toughness]), Impervious Toughness 5, Super-Senses 3 (Acute Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Tracking Scent), Regeneration 5 (Checks to recover from being Injured after one Standard Action worth of rest) Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 2,800 pounds)
Equipment: Gas Mask (Immunity to gas and poison attacks), Goggles (5pt Sensory Shield against Visual Dazzle Attacks), Semiautmoatic Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage), Bayonet (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), 3 "Potato Masher" Fragmentation Grenades (do 8 Damage to anything in a 15 foot radius)
Complications: Blindly follows orders like a robot.
Drawbacks: Disability (can no longer speak any human language) 4pts, Disability (hideously mutated) 1pt, Moderate Vulnerability (to Mind Control) 4pts.

Background: A mountain boy from Bavaria, Stern is the most bestial of the group, and the one who remembers the least about his past. He isn't color-blind like the others and his senses are more acute. He can actually track a human being by their scent, even through his gas-mask, and he has to be ordered not to sniff everyone he encounters.

Stern loves the mountains and the forest. If he ever gets separated from the group, he will make for the wilderness and live there like a wild beast, eventually forgetting his training as a soldier entirely.

Hans Nordwald

PL: 8

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 20 (+5)
Int: 6 (-4) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 6 (-2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 8
Defense: 8 (+8 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 8 (5 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 8 **Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Notice 7 (+6), Perform (Music) 1 (-1), Profession (soldier) 12 (+8), Stealth 3 (+4)
Feats: Chokehold, Fearless, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple
Powers: Device (Body Armor [+3 Toughness]), Impervious Toughness 5, Super-Senses 2 (Acute Hearing, Low-Light

Vision), Regeneration 5 (Checks to recover from being Injured after one Standard Action worth of rest) Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 2,800 pounds)
Equipment: Gas Mask (Immunity to gas and poison attacks), Goggles (5pt Sensory Shield against Visual Dazzle Attacks), Semiautmoatic Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage), Bayonet (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), 3 "Potato Masher" Fragmentation Grenades (do 8 Damage to anything in a 15 foot radius)
Complications: Blindly follows orders like a robot.
Drawbacks: Disability (color-blind) 1 pt, Disability (can no longer speak any human language) 4pts, Disability (hideously mutated) 1pt, Moderate Vulnerability (to Mind Control) 4pts.
Background: More aggressive than most of the others, Nordwald is under orders not to get into fights with his teammates. He is easily frustrated and on edge, for he is tormented by his fragmented memories of his wife and young son. He doesn't know who they are, but he remembers their faces and knows that it's somehow important that he see them again—especially his son, who he has barely even had a chance to meet (in fact his son is still alive and living in Dusseldorf, although it's unlikely that they would recognize each other now).

If he is captured, he will try to draw his wife and son's face on the wall of wherever he is being held, but grow frustrated and start breaking things.

Horst Blucher

PL: 8

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 20 (+5)
Int: 6 (-4) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 6 (-2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 8

Defense: 8 (+8 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 8 (5 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 8 **Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Notice 7 (+6), Perform (Music) 1 (-1), Profession (soldier) 12 (+8), Stealth 3 (+4)
Feats: Chokehold, Fearless, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple
Powers: Device (Body Armor [+3 Toughness]), Impervious Toughness 5, Super-Senses 2 (Acute Hearing, Low-Light Vision), Regeneration 5 (Checks to recover from being Injured after one Standard Action worth of rest) Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 2,800 pounds)
Equipment: Gas Mask (Immunity to gas and poison attacks), Goggles (5pt Sensory Shield against Visual Dazzle Attacks), Semiautmoatic Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage), Bayonet (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), 3 "Potato Masher" Fragmentation Grenades (do 8 Damage to anything in a 15 foot radius)
Complications: Blindly follows orders like a robot.
Drawbacks: Disability (color-blind) 1 pt, Disability (can no longer speak any human language) 4pts, Disability (hideously mutated) 1pt, Moderate Vulnerability (to Mind Control) 4pts.
Background: A keen amateur musician, if he sees any musical instrument (and he isn't under orders to do something else) he will attempt to grab it and play it. He plays so horribly that he soon gets frustrated and smashes the instrument. Kurtz doesn't know about his fixation yet (they haven't run into any musical instruments), and hasn't yet instructed Horst not to grab every musical instrument he sees.

Although he can't speak, if anyone starts singing any old German beerhouse songs around him he will try to join in, moaning gutturally under his mask.

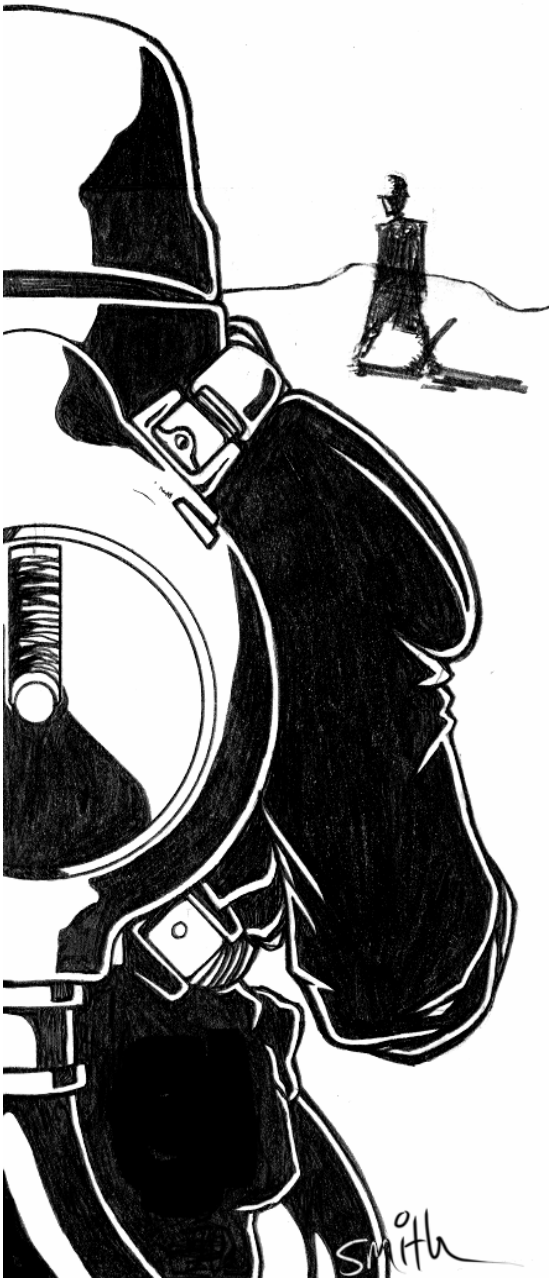
CHAPTER SIX: DON'T GO NEAR THE CASTLE!

The ruins of the fortress are roughly an hour's hike away from the village. The structure soars up nearly fifty feet above the ground, looking like a deranged architect's attempt to build a ziggurat. It is a simple stone and mortar construction but the blocks are oddly warm to the touch. The concentrated magical energies that will result in the resurrection of Death's Sting have had the additional effect of making all the walls into super-strong materials (hardness 25.) Built long before the Age of Chivalry, it doesn't much resemble a medieval castle. It looks like something older, weirder and more threatening.

When the villagers first began their plans to turn the castle and its environs into a tourist attraction, they put a new, thick oak door on the front gate, along with a padlock (Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to pick, Toughness 5.) If the heroes persuaded any of the villagers to guide them to the castle, then the guide will also have brought the key. If not, then they'll have to get through the door on their own.

If either Lazlo Janovics or Janos Dodrescu (or for that matter any other really competent outdoorsman) is guiding the PCs to the castle, they notice something weird. Normally there are birds hopping around on the castle walls. There are no birds today. In fact, once they step inside, there aren't any insect noises, either. Nothing but the sound of the wind. It's as if every living thing has suddenly fled this place.

Any PC with the ability to detect living presences will discover that this is exactly what has happened. PCs with enough levels of Microscopic Vision may discover something even more unnerving. There aren't even any micro-organisms on the surfaces of the stones. This place is as sterile as the world's cleanest surgical theater or the surface of the moon. The PCs and the Ubersoldaten may literally be the only living things to stir within these walls.



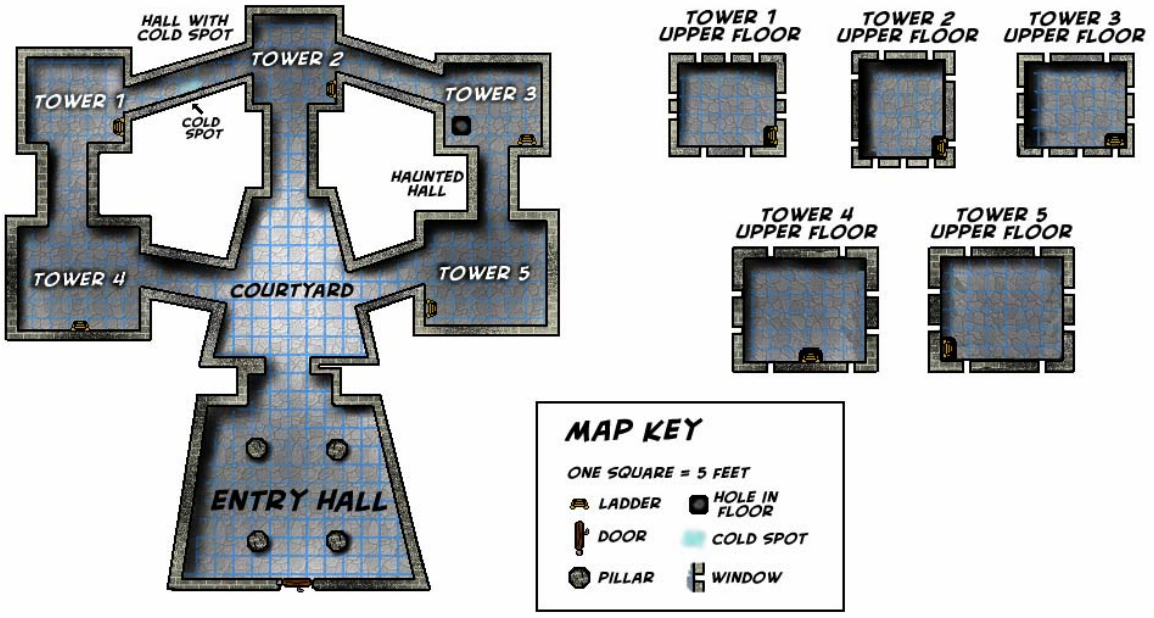
If the Special Unit has arrived here before the PCs, they will have smashed through the door. Two of the troopers will be stationed at the entrance. If Kurtz has been warned about the heroes, two more will have been sent up to the second floor in Tower Four in order to keep watch. The guards at the door will fire on anyone who approaches, other than a member of the Special Unit.

Clever heroes might try to trick the guards by dressing up in armor taken from the Special Unit troopers that they fought in the village, or by using illusion or shapechanging powers to run a similar bluff. However, if Kurtz is already aware that the PCs are in the vicinity, then he will have instructed the guards to ask for a password from any trooper who approaches. Most of them can't really talk, so they will gesture at the approaching PCs to halt and then motion as though asking them to speak, grunting horribly as they do so (any PC who speaks German can make a Notice check vs. DC 10 to figure out that the poor wretches are trying to say "Password, please"). There is no password, and only stating this (in German) will prevent the guards from firing.

Especially clever heroes might anticipate this, or something like it, and employ a stratagem such as having the disguised troopers make a fighting withdrawal to the castle, under heavy fire from the rest of the heroes. In this situation, Kurtz's instructions will be forgotten, allowing some of the heroes to get into a position to sneak attack the guards. However, the guards on the upper floor will be watching any activity very carefully, and if they spot the "fleeing troopers" talking with their "pursuers" in the nearby forest, then the entire operation will be blown.

In playtesting we found that PCs will try all kinds of ingenious tactical trickery to fight or evade the Special Troopers in this scene. Everything from Illusions to Teleportation to X-Ray Vision to Elemental Control can be brought to bear on the situation. The GM may have to play it by ear when the PCs start improvising with their powers. The crucial thing to remember is that the fortress has a magically enhanced Toughness of 25, so efforts to bring it down on the heads of the Special Troopers will almost certainly fail, while efforts to outwit them or bewilder them into ineffectiveness will have a much greater chance of succeeding. And don't be afraid to let the PCs eliminate some or all of the Ubersoldaten if they play their cards right. The real challenge is Death's Sting, not the Special Unit.

FORTRESS OF DEATH'S STING



However the heroes get into the castle, they will find it largely empty. Whatever furnishings survived the self-destruction of Death's Sting have not survived the centuries since. As mentioned earlier, there is no internal lighting, although there are many windows to let in the sun during the daytime. The staircases between the floors of the castle were made of wood that has long since decayed, but the villagers have placed ladders in all but one of the stairwells.

The one stairwell without a ladder leads down into the catacombs. The villagers decided that when the tourists arrived, they would be told that this area was off limits until they had enough money to install lights.

Partly underground, the fortress is built right into the mountainside. The towers and the entrance hall rise up out of the rock, and the courtyard is open to the sky, but the halls and the bottom floors of each tower are buried in the cliff. This has the unnerving effect of muffling all the outside sound in these parts of the fortress, making the silence even deeper and more eerie. The PCs' voices seem very loud and unnatural in the rear chambers and the echoes take a long time to die away. Sometimes people who listen too long to the fading echoes start to think they hear other voices, whispering terrible things.

Entrance Hall

Lit by tall narrow window slits along the front wall, this room is completely devoid of furnishings or ornamentation. Four massive octagonal pillars hold up the twenty-foot high roof. They might make good hiding places if the PCs are playing a game of cat and mouse with the Special Troopers.

The hall is shaped like a trapezoid and its floor slopes gently upward toward the back. This creates the optical illusion that it is much deeper than it really is. The distorted perspective is stronger from the

door than it is from anywhere else in the hall. When the PCs enter the hall for the first time, tell them that it 's about a hundred feet long. Then let them make Notice rolls vs. DC 10. If they succeed, tell them that in fact the walls slope backwards and the floor slopes up, and that it's more like fifty feet long. They will suddenly figure out the truth anyway, on their first Move Action inside the hall. Tell them that the perspective "goes all wrong" and then explain the distorting trick and the hall's actual depth. Anyone firing a ranged attack into the hall from the door suffers a -2 penalty until they figure out the hall's actual dimensions.

The Courtyard

The bottom of the courtyard is actually below the surface of the ground, but it's open to the sky, fifteen feet or so above. The yard has no well, no trees, no fountain, and no decoration at all. The only sound here is the wind.

There are three arched doors that lead into the face of the mountain. The PCs can see a little light filtering through from the towers beyond, but the halls themselves are dark and their entrances somehow remind the PCs of hungry black mouths.

Hall With the Cold Spot

This hall is much like the others—tall, narrow, unornamented and somehow brutal in its lines. Yet there is something not quite right about this place. There is a consistent cold spot just off the center of the corridor. It does not cause any damage, but anyone who passes through this spot will feel uncomfortably cold, unless they are totally Immune to Willpower effects. Even characters who are wearing powered armor or some other kind of portable life-support gear will feel cold, as will characters who are normally Immune to cold-based effects.

If a guide is with the PCs, he (or she) grins when the Player Characters pass through the cold spot and says "Isn't that great? I wanted you to see that—nobody seems to be able to figure out what causes it."

Haunted Hall

The first time the PCs step into this hall, one of them has an eerie experience. Pick a PC who doesn't have any super-senses, psychic powers or information-gathering spells. They get the sudden and totally irrational impression that the hallway is getting longer behind them, stretching away down to infinity. If they actually look behind them this impression goes away, never to return.

If anyone uses magic, super-powers or equipment to determine the source of this strange little episode, they learn nothing. Whatever caused it isn't happening anymore.

Kurtz is also affected by the illusion, as are his Special Troopers. The first time they venture down this hall, they will all suddenly glance behind themselves and hesitate for one action before moving on. Depending in the situation, the PCs might or might not be able to turn this to their advantage.

Tower One, Bottom Level

This room is dominated by a bas relief on the rear wall—the only decoration to be found in the whole fortress. It is a huge copy of the emblem of Death's Sting (the complete version) some 15 feet high. Even though it is more than a thousand years old, it bears an eerie resemblance to the version found on Ken Cantrick's bedsheets. Clearly the PCs have come to the right fortress.

Tower One, the Upper Levels

Both of the upper levels of Tower One lie empty and deserted. Their floorplan is identical, which is why we have only one image for them both. The villagers have set up a ladder which leads to the second floor, but there isn't one between the second floor and the third. There isn't much of interest up there anyway, although a flying PC might be able to use it a place to hide from Obersturnfuhrer Kurtz and his Special Troopers. There are bird droppings all over the uppermost floor, yet there are no birds.

Tower Two, Bottom Level

Opening directly off the courtyard, this chamber contains nothing but a sturdy modern ladder, which leads up to the floor above. Buried deep in the rock, it is utterly silent and desolate. Nothing stirs the dust, no sound breaks the stillness.

Tower Two, the Upper Levels

Like all the towers in the fortress, this one is three stories tall. A ladder leads up to the second level, but no one has yet put one up to the third. Both levels share the same simple floor plan.

The roof on the third story is one of the few places in the castle that hasn't stood up very well to the passing centuries. There are piles of loose stones lying around on the floor and there are visible gaps in the ceiling overhead, some of them as much as three feet wide. The whole thing looks as though it could collapse on your head at any second, but in fact the whole structure has been magically reinforced, just like the rest of the fortress, and is Toughness 25. Even the fallen stones lying on the floor can't be picked up without first overcoming a DC 20 resistance.

Birds have clearly been living here and recently, to judge by all the droppings on the floor, yet now they are all gone

Tower Three, Bottom Level

A large squarish hole in the floor of the first level leads down to the catacombs 20 feet beneath. The villagers from Stegiocavar haven't gotten around to exploring the tunnels or putting up lights down there, so they have yet to set up any ladders. Ion Grigorescu wanted to put traffic cones around the hole as a safety measure, but no one is sure where to buy any. A little light filters down into the hole, just enough to dimly make out a small section of flagstone floor. No walls are visible. There is no sign of any motion or activity, but of course anything at all could be lurking down there, just outside the tiny patch of light.

The ladders which the villagers have set up in the towers are only fifteen feet long and can't reach the floor at the bottom of the hole. To get down there, the PCs will have to fly, jump, use a rope or take some equipment from the Special Unit.

Tower Three, the Upper Levels

As with the other towers, the floorplan of both upper stories is identical. There is no ladder between the second and third stories.

The PCs are unlikely to come all the way up to the top story, but if they do, they will find the only trace of life in the entire fortress. A small dead bird lies in one corner, its tiny body contorted into a strange, unnatural posture. It is much older and dryer than you might guess, and will instantly crumble into dust if it is if touched. Even the bones will disintegrate if they have destroyed the bird's corpse. Just after they leave the room the PCs hear a frantic cheeping and fluttering from inside it. If they look back in the room, the sound stops. There is nothing in the room. The noise does not repeat itself.

Tower Four, Bottom Level

Something appears to be embedded in the wall of this chamber, stuck between the stones. It looks a lot like a human skeleton, contorted horribly as with some excruciating pain.

It's hard to really be sure if that's what it is—the skeleton is embedded high in the wall, twelve feet or so above the floor at a spot that's difficult to see from a good angle (although a flying character could go have a look easily enough). The skeleton is real, although it's unclear how it could have been embedded in between the stones so perfectly. If the PCs have a guide, and point this out to them, the guide frowns, looks puzzled and says "That's really strange. It's hard to tell from down here, but I could almost swear that it's lying in a different position from the last time I was here."

If the PCs leave the room and then enter it again, the skeleton is lying in still another pose (although here too, the height and angle makes it difficult to be absolutely sure). The skeleton will not attack anyone, or do anything else apart from shifting its position on the wall. It will never move if it

is being observed, even by super-senses like X-Ray Vision or ESP.

If the PCs seem to be spending too much time in this room, distracted by this minor mystery, then either the skeleton disappears altogether the next time no one is looking at it, or Kurtz and his Special Troopers show up and the PCs suddenly have more important things to worry about.

Tower Four, the Upper Levels

A new wooden ladder leads up through a hole in the floor to the second story. There is no ladder leading to the floor above. Anyone who goes up there will find that the roof looks unsound. It isn't as bad as the roof of Tower Two, no bricks are lying around on the floor, but you can see daylight through the roof in places. This is deceptive—the walls and roof here have been reinforced in exactly the same way as the rest of the fortress, and despite looking unsteady, are in fact Toughness 25. A lot of birds made their home in this tower until recently. Droppings are everywhere, some of them fresh. Where have they all gone?

Tower Five, Bottom Level

Deserted and silent, the first floor of Tower Five stands empty. There isn't even much dust.

Tower Five, the Upper Levels

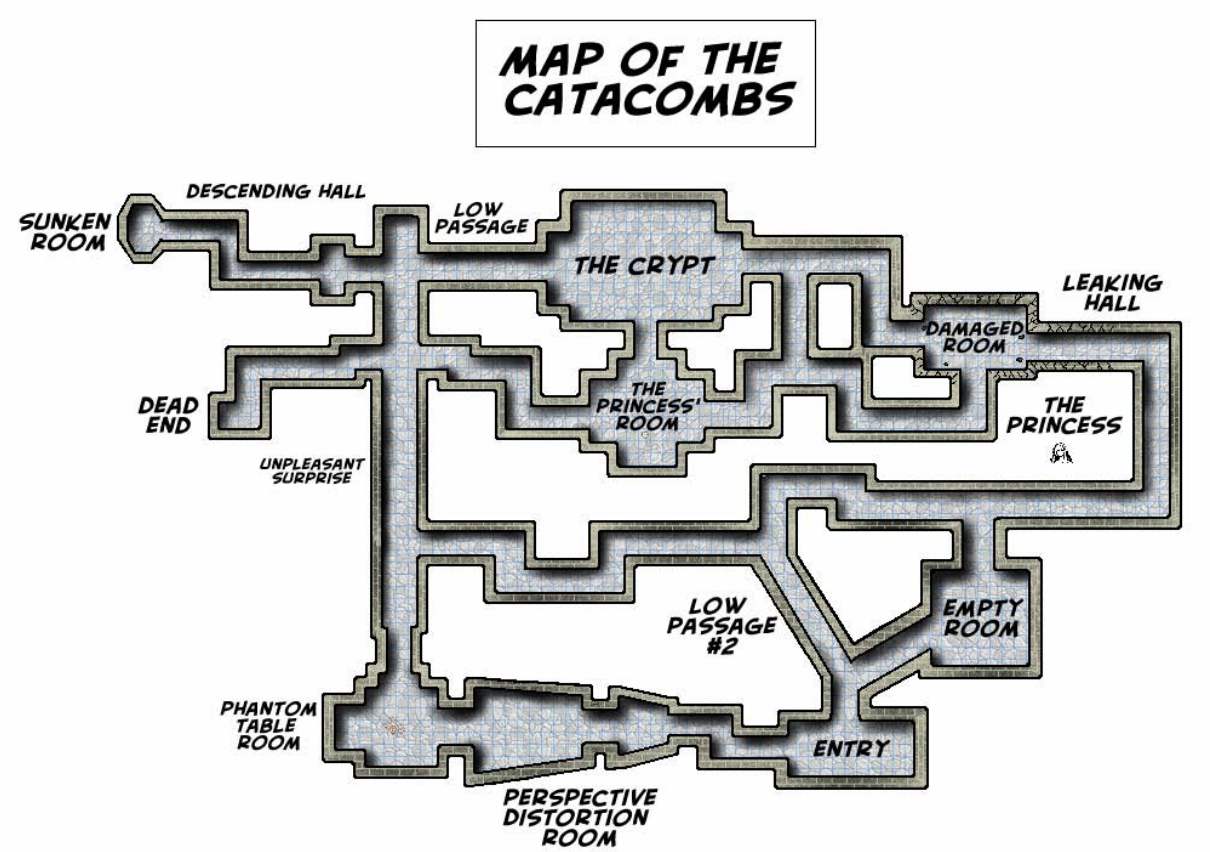
A ladder leads up to the second level, but there's not much to see up there.

The third floor is also empty. Unlike the other tower rooms, birds seem to have avoided this one.

Anyone with Postcognition or some kind of Cosmic Awareness who ventures up to the top floor becomes immediately sure that something terrible happened in this room, a long time ago. Something so awful, wicked and cruel that even in this place it stands out, resounding down through the centuries to the present epoch.

If they try to figure out just what happened, the GM should tell them that while the pain of whoever suffered here is still potent, the long ages have blurred the details off of it. Someone was tricked, someone was horribly betrayed, someone died in terrible pain and worse, terrible despair. If they push harder, they sense that it was a child—no, a lot of children. They were promised something wonderful, they were given something hideous instead, they died here, right over there by that wall on the left. You can still make out a very faint, large stain upon the stones.

More than that it is impossible to learn (it's just a bit of atmosphere and isn't really relevant to this adventure, and would you really want to know any more?)



The Catacombs

The catacombs run deep—an average of twenty feet beneath the fortress. The halls and chambers meander seemingly at random, their contents vanished, their original functions unguessable. The only room with much of anything left in it is the Crypt.

It's very still, down here in the rock. No outside sound is detectable at all, and the noises that the intruders make echo weirdly through the twisting passageways from unexpected directions. Sometimes they seem to last too long, or to distort into other, more threatening sounds. The only open passageway to the outside world is the hole in the floor of Tower Three and the air doesn't circulate at all. There not even the faintest hint of a draft. The lack of fresh air could start to make the catacombs dangerous if you spent a few days here, breathing up all the oxygen, but of course the PCs won't be staying long enough for it to become an issue.

The tunnels are oppressively claustrophobic. The ceiling is about seven and a half feet high in most places, although it is lower in a few spots. The rooms they connect to are much less cramped, and have ceilings that vary from ten to fifteen feet in height. The crypt itself is nearly twenty feet deep.

The walls in the catacombs are as stark and grimly functional as the rest of the fortress. There are no paintings, frescoes, carvings or any other kind of adornment on them. Nor does any moss or lichen grow on them—which is very weird. They are warm to the touch, which is even weirder. Somehow the unnatural warmth in the walls fails to heat the dank air, which always remains at about fifty-five degrees.
The catacombs are in good repair for their age. There are a few rooms that have suffered some water damage, and have some loose stones falling out of the ceiling, but now of course the entire complex has been magically reinforced to Toughness 25.

Entry Room

Smaller and narrower than it looks from above, this used to be the stairwell to the catacombs, but the stairs were made of split logs and have long ago decayed into nothing. This room will probably be the PC's first experience of what it's like in the catacombs, so the GM should take care to set the scene for them here. Still, silent, cold but not dangerously so, full of unnerving echoes. Not enough dust or debris lie on the floor to leave good footprints.

Damaged Chamber

The roof in here has been slowly leaking for decades. By now there are visible cracks in the walls and ceiling, with water seeping out of them and down to a pool in the middle of the floor. From there the water trickles off down the adjacent hall (see the description for the "Leaking Hall" below). Three or four loose bricks lie on the floor—an alarming sight to anyone who has the skill Craft (Structural). To anyone with this skill, this looks like the most dangerous room in the whole complex. The ceiling could give way at any moment. This is however deceptive. In fact the walls and ceiling are reinforced by the same dire magic as the rest of the fortress, and are Toughness 25, just like everything else. Even lifting a brick off the floor requires a Strength check vs. DC 20 (once you tear the brick loose it becomes a normal, non-magical Toughness 3 piece of stone, and will do 2 damage if used as a weapon).

Leaking Hall

A thin trickle of water runs silently down the middle of this hallway. It has been leaking down the hall for so long that it has actually worn a shallow channel in the stone floor. The water mostly comes from a pool in the Damaged Room, but as you get close to the room you will find that it is also leaking out of cracks in the walls of this hallway, which get worse and worse as you near the room. The ceiling starts to look distinctly unsafe as you near the hall's end, although it is in fact Toughness 25, just like the rest of the structure.

Room With The Phantom Table

This is the only place in the whole fortress where any trace of the original furnishings has survived. There used to be a big, heavy wooden table here in the middle of the chamber. There were other furnishings as well as plenty of hooks, knives, restraining straps and so forth, but they have all long since vanished. The table has been reduced to a dark stain, but the air down here hasn't circulated in so long that even though the table disintegrated more than a thousand years ago, you can still smell the rotting wood.

If for some reason the PCs choose to perform Psychometry or Postcognition on the room, they learn that there used to be a huge, heavy, unadorned table here, made of thick unvarnished planks (something like four-by sixes, but less evenly finished), that it was an ugly, brutal looking piece of furniture with no decoration and that for some reason people were afraid of it. It also reveals the surprising information that the table rotted away more than ten centuries ago, despite the fact that they can still smell it.

If they push further, or ask about the rest of the room, read them the passage above about its other furnishings. That should be sufficient to let them know why people feared this table.

Low Passage

This tunnel is only five feet high. Anyone taller than that will have to stoop to go down it. This reduces their speed by 1/3, although clever Players may be able to figure out ways for their characters to get around this limitation—for example flying down the tunnel in a reclining pose, or becoming Immaterial and strolling down the tunnel with their feet immersed in the floor).

It's even more claustrophobic here than in the rest of the catacombs. Anyone with a Complication that involves a fear of enclosed spaces should definitely bring it into play here.

Low Passage #2

Another tunnel with a five-foot ceiling. It is both difficult and unpleasant for anyone taller than five feet in height to walk through. See the first "Low Passage" for a description of what this means in game terms.

Perspective-Distorting Rooms

As with the entry hall and courtyard upstairs, these trapezoidal rooms are constructed to distort the viewer's sense of perspective. Their slanted walls make both chambers look significantly longer than they really are, at least while you are standing in the doorway. Anyone viewing the room with a flashlight fails to see this effect, since they can't view the whole room at once. PCs who enter either room may have a tense moment—the doorway on the far side clearly leads into some other open space, and anyone could be lurking on either side of the entrance. But of course no one is. The PCs are the first people to enter these two chambers in decades, perhaps centuries.

Dead End

This twisting passageway comes to an abrupt end. It looks as though some chamber on the other side has been walled off—the bricks are a slightly different shape and size from the other walls. But this isn't the case. There is nothing on the other side of that wall but hundreds of tons of rock and dirt, and anyone who manages to break though the Toughness 25 stones risks bringing the whole tunnel down on top of them. It's the GM's option as to how much damage that would do and what would be required to dig their way out of it, but it should be a catastrophic, nigh-impossible situation.

Descending Tunnel

This tunnel slopes gently downwards, to a room that's about five feet deeper than the rest of the catacombs. The slope is noticeable, but not severe. Any small items placed on the floor here may roll away, at the GM's discretion, but the incline isn't strong enough to interfere with movement. This is a dangerous place to be. As the PCs advance down the hallway, any of them with a sense of smell may Notice (DC 10) that the air gets significantly staler. In fact carbon dioxide has been accumulating down here for a thousand and a half years, and the air in the room at the bottom is not safe to breathe for long. See the room's description for details. Anyone standing in the squares immediately outside the room's door has about twenty minutes worth of oxygen left, but divide this by the number of characters who are present, either in those squares or in the room itself. After they run out of oxygen, they should start making Suffocation rolls.

Sunken Room

Deeper in the rock than the other chambers, this one has been acting as a kind of sink for the carbon dioxide in the catacombs over the last millennium and a half. The air is here is very low on oxygen, and won't be safe to breathe for long. Conditions in the two squares outside the room's door are just as bad. The room contains enough breathable air for one person for twenty minutes. Divide that by the number of people present (count only the ones that have to breathe) to find out how much time the group has before they all start having to make Suffocation rolls every round. Please remember that anyone standing in the squares immediately outside the doorway is drawing on this same twenty-minute pool of air. Anyone breathing the air who has a sense of smell can make a Notice Check vs. DC 10 to figure out that it is dangerously stale. This does not automatically tell them how long they have, but there are superpowers (Analyze and Super-Senses: Acute Smell, for example) that might be able to determine it, at the GM's option.

Empty Room

This room doesn't appear to contain anything of interest, although the echoes seem a little louder in here. However, by some strange acoustic trick anyone who stands in the upper left corner can hear everything that it happening n the Crypt, and vice versa. The sound is distorted, -2 to

make out words, and sometimes the people you are listening to seem to insert vile threats and obscenities into their sentences when they haven't actually said them. Anyone who stands here and listens to a conversation in the Crypt for more than a minute will start to think they hear another voice, one which isn't really there, muttering and grumbling to itself in anger, just a little too faintly to make out the words.

If the PCs figure out the trick to this room, it might give them an excellent opportunity to eavesdrop on Obersturnfuhrer Kurtz and his men, or to distract them with a voice from nowhere.

The Princess

Anyone who uses X-Ray vision to look through this wall will see a girl, perhaps eleven or twelve years old, standing in the solid rock. They only see her once and they only see her for a moment, before she darts out of their line of sight and vanishes. They can't make out her face but they can see that she has long blonde hair and that she is wearing some kind of white dress, covered in dark splotches like mud or blood. The dark stuff is all over her right hand as well, and her index finger looks hurt. They do not see her again. Nor does anyone else who looks through the wall.

Hall of Unpleasant Surprises

The hall itself looks much like the others, although the ceiling is only six feet high, making it a little more claustrophobic than most of them. When the PCs reach the place marked "Unpleasant Surprise", pick a PC who has no magical or extrasensory powers, and tell their player that a big black formless shape just stepped out of the wall—they've just glimpsed it in their peripheral vision. When they turn to look directly at it, it's gone. No one else saw it. If they tell any of their companions about this encounter, a moment later the ubiquitous echoes suddenly whisper their first name (their real one) and then something that might "shouldn't have told"—it's impossible to make it out clearly enough to be sure. No one else hears this. Any efforts to detect magic or evil spirits or whatever else might have caused the unpleasant surprise will fail. Magic and evil are all around you, it's hard to pinpoint anything specific in this hall. Perhaps the PC who heard the voice is just crazy? The PC never experiences this effect again, but if any of the Special Troopers come down this tunnel they encounter the same phenomenon, and may get distracted by it at a crucial moment.

The Princess' Room

A human skull and some finger bones lie on the floor of this room. These sad remains have lain here for a millennium and a half, but a few long blonde hairs still cling to the skull. Someone has completely covered the walls with large splotchy letters, about three inches high. It looks almost as though the words were painted on with a brush. They are so faded and crumbled now that it's very difficult to read them. In fact it takes a Notice check vs. DC 10 to even recognize that they were letters.

Anyone who tries to study the writing will see that it looks like a list of words, all between ten and fourteen letters in length, all re-combinations of the same letters, not two exactly alike. A Profession (forensic) or an Investigation Check vs. DC 15 reveals that the medium is very old dried blood, probably applied hastily with the tip of a bleeding finger. But there's so much of it! Whoever wrote this list must have lost a whole lot of their blood doing it—enough to put their life in serious jeopardy, if not kill them outright.

It is difficult to use psychometry or postcongition to see what happened here, since it was so long ago. If a PC attempts it and succeeds, they learn only this much: *"The princess tried and tried, but could not guess his name."*

The Crypt

The largest chamber in the complex, the air is detectably colder here than in the rest of the tunnels (about forty degrees) while the stone walls are even warmer (although still not hot to the touch). Anyone with the ability to detect magic or evil will know that it is stronger in this room than anywhere

else in the fortress. As an additional hint for the PCs, Barry Robinson should have described the shape of the room where Death's Sting will return to our realm—it's described in the *Liber Malerudorum*. This isn't it, although it is the same shape. Anyone who makes a Search check vs. DC 20 can see that there is a loose flagstone in the floor. Anyone who can lift it (the stone weighs 2,100 pounds) discovers a sixty-foot shaft leading down into the real crypt beneath.

BATTLE IN THE CATACOMBS

If the Special Unit got here first, Kurtz has led the bulk of his force to the crypt, believing (incorrectly, as it turns out) that this will be where Death's Sting returns. He stations two of his men at each of the three exits from the central crypt, and sets the rest up in a "firing squad" line-up facing the wall. Thus situated, he waits for Death's Sting to appear.

If, on the other hand, the heroes have beaten the Special Unit to the castle, then they will probably also arrive in the crypt before the troopers do. In this case, Kurtz will order his men to attack. The troopers will hit the heroes from all directions at once, in order to take advantage of undefended flanks, starting the assault with a barrage of grenades. (Kurtz notes that the brick making up the castle walls is warm to the touch, and correctly deduces that it has been magically enhanced, which makes the use of explosives much less suicidal than it might be.)

In either case, Kurtz will order a retreat if more than two-thirds of the force he has with him is incapacitated or killed. Unless pursued, the Special Unit will only retreat as far as the hills outside the castle. Kurtz plans to wait until either the heroes deal with Death's Sting, or he deals with them, and then eliminate the weakened victor. If Kurtz himself is removed from the battle, then his troops will fight to the bitter end.

Assuming that they survive these encounters, the heroes should end up in the "crypt". A Search check (DC 20) will reveal that one of the stones covering the floor is loose, and can be lifted up (by anyone able to lift about a ton of stone, at least.) Super senses might reveal the presence of the actual crypt beneath this empty chamber. The shaft beneath the loose stone descends nearly sixty feet, to the floor of the real crypt. Here is the actual resting place of Death's Sting. Here he will rise again.

GM'S OPTIONS: BUT WHAT IF THEY DON'T FIND THE CRYPT?

The PCs know Death's Sting will appear in the castle, they know the hour of his appearance, but they have no pressing reason to go seek out the crypt. If Kurtz got here first then the PCs can just follow his men and see which room they are guarding. But if the PCs arrive at the fortress first, without any clear idea of what they are supposed to do next, they may wander around in the catacombs at random, getting frustrated and wasting time, Worse, they may decide to stake out the wrong room. If you sense that your PCs are failing to understand what they're supposed to do next, there are a number of things that you can do to steer them toward the climactic encounter in the crypt.

1) Nazis in the Deep!

If the time is right, Kurtz and his Special Troopers may come blundering into the tunnels. The PCs will certainly hear them and will be able to follow them from the noise. Why are these intruders marching and speaking German? What evil mischief can they be up to? Perhaps the PCs had better go investigate. This will, of course, lead them straight to the crypt.

2) One last Desperate Message

As soon as you sense that your PCs are wandering off track, they spy something scratched into the wall. Some previous

explorer was trying to make a crude map of the catacombs, perhaps to help find his way out. The lines look very old, but they've been perfectly preserved down here in the still and silent air. The map is incomplete—it shows how to get from the entrance at the bottom of Tower Three to the PC's present position and from there to the crypt. All the side passages are truncated,--whoever drew the map either didn't think they were important or didn't bother to explore them. They way the crypt is drawn seems to indicate that it is important. The lines are deeper and there is what looks like a sarcophagus in the middle. If the PCs still don't seem to get it, tell them that this room is marked with an "X".

If they use Postcognition to find out what happened here, they get a vague sense that whoever made this map felt afraid, but also excited, and as though they were running out of time. If they make a power check vs. DC 15, they get a vision of a tall thin, pale man in a long fur-trimmed coat. He has shoulder-length hair, a fu-Manchu moustache and sideburns. His jeans have bell-bottoms and his lapels are very wide. In one ear he wears an earring with the emblem of Death's Sting (the European version). He inscribes the map with a Swiss army knife, by the light of a bulky old Coleman lantern. Then he suddenly looks up as though he has heard something. Cautiously, he takes the lantern and sneaks out of the room. The light from the lantern is visible for a little while, and then it stops. No trace of the man or his body is ever found. The PCs never learn his fate.

3) I Have a Bad Feeling About This

Anyone with the ability to detect magic, the undead, "evil" or weird forces will feel the center of the labyrinth to be the Crypt. The emanations are strongest from that direction and the room itself positively drips with strange and sinister power.

4) You're Getting Warmer

As a last resort, the GM can tell the PCs that the unnaturally warm walls grow slightly warmer in one direction (although they never get too hot to touch). If they follow this broad hint, they will be led straight to the crypt.

Adjusting the Challenge for Your PCs

It's easy to make this scene less difficult. Just give the PCs a chance to catch the Special Unit by surprise, or to take them out one by one before they can warn Kurtz. Or have one of them get the drop on the PCs with a Blitzenschlagger (see Page 61) which then explodes, taking out one or two Troopers and throwing the rest into momentary panic and confusion.

If you want to have the Special Unit give the PCs more of a challenge, then let them set an ambush for the Player Characters in the main courtyard (see Page 83) or in the "Perspective Distortion Room" in the catacombs (see Page 88). You can also equip three of them with Damage 12 Blitzenschlagger weapons, as per the section on Page 61. Or do both. If the PCs step into an ambush, assume the Troopers have made all their stealth rolls. Unless a PC has some kind of superhuman senses that could give them a chance to detect the waiting troopers (Scent, or X-Ray Vision or Danger Sense, for example) they will be hit with withering fire from at least three directions the moment they step into the room (or courtyard, as the case may be).

For an extra-special surprise, perhaps the Romanian superhero called "the White Eagle" (see his stats and background on page 100) shows up hunting the PCs and a three-way fight ensues. He's not a subtle or a quiet guy and if he attacks the Player Characters, Kurtz and his men will instantly hear it. In fact you can hear it halfway down the mountainside!

CHAPTER SEVEN:
OH GRAVE WHERE IS THY VICTORY?

In sharp contrast to the Spartan décor of the rest of the castle, the true crypt is elaborately decorated. A great sarcophagus lies on a dais in the middle of the chamber. There are two columns on each side of the dais, each decorated with a human skeleton posed as though climbing them. On the walls are small picture-stories of the many dark and bloody deeds of Death's Sting. (To make one up, substitute him as the magical figure in any given fairy tale – such as Cinderella's fairy godmother – and then change the tale's ending so that it becomes bloody and perverse – in the case of the Cinderella example, when she and her magical entourage arrive at the dance, they slaughter everyone there, including the handsome prince, and eat them). Four braziers surround the dais, though none contain anything flammable.

If the heroes open up the sarcophagus, they will find it to be empty as well–no bones, no dust, nothing. But heroes with the ability to detect magical energies will find them strongly emanating from the interior of the coffin. This might suggest to them that destroying it could prevent the resurrection of Death's Sting. However, as the sarcophagus is even more indestructible than the walls (with a hardness of 30) it should be resistant to any damage the heroes can inflict.

THE REAL CRYPT

Half an hour before midnight, all of the braziers suddenly ignite with a cool blue flame, filling the room with their dim light. This is accompanied by a surge of mystical energy. Another surge occurs at five minutes before midnight, when a whistling noise begins to echo through the chamber, and the temperature starts falling rapidly.

At exactly midnight, a rustling sound will be heard inside the sarcophagus. If it has been opened, the whirling dust cloud within will be visible. Within moments, Death's Sting is restored from nothingness to full "vitality", though his powers are greatly diminished from what they once were. (he was aware that this would happen, and so is not surprised or startled by his weakness.) He rises up out of the

sarcophagus, smiling horribly at anyone present and using his fear-inducing power as his first attack. The walls of the crypt seem to melt around him, revealing a much larger chamber that looks like some kind of satanic anti-cathedral (this is an illusion, but Death's Sting isn't maintaining it himself—it just flickers into being automatically when he rises).

In the battle that follows, Death's Sting goes all-out. If any of the heroes have mystical powers, he targets them first, so as to steal their abilities and add them to his arsenal. Other targets are subjected to his claws. He will not retreat, regardless of his condition, unless somehow confronted with the rising sun. In that case alone, he will retreat into the darkness of the catacombs if at all possible.

If the heroes are not in the true crypt when the resurrection occurs, then Death's Sting swiftly and silently scales the shaft to the false crypt, and then bursts out, probably gaining total surprise. If the heroes are still fighting the Special Unit when he arrives, Death's Sting divides his attacks roughly evenly between the surviving troopers and any non-mystical heroes. Kurtz, if still active, orders his men to concentrate their fire on their actual mission objective, though he orders a retreat if he loses enough of his men, as described earlier.

The most effective way to deal with Death's Sting is to expose him to sunlight. Unfortunately, the sun won't rise for more than five hours after the resurrection. But this doesn't matter if you have a time machine.

By a happy coincidence, Kurtz has one. It is currently set to return to Berlin in early 1942, but a full-round action and a DC 25 Knowledge (technology) check will permit the heroes to adjust that setting to one more suited to their purposes. Death's Sting must then be grappled (no easy task!) and the device activated. It will never occur to Kurtz to try this, and he will not give the device to the heroes without a fight.

Adjusting the Challenge for Your PCs

Fiddling with the challenge level in this final scene is largely a matter of adjusting the opposition's tactics. To make it easier, either have the villains focus on hitting each other for the first few rounds, rather than the PCs, or else have Kurtz propose an alliance with the PCs the moment he gets a good look at the opposition. Both the Special Unit and Death's Sting are a lot easier to beat if you fight them one at a time rather than simultaneously.

To make it tougher, have everyone focus on hitting the PCs at once for the first few rounds, preferably from different directions at once. You can increase the number of Special Unit Troopers who have survived until this scene (you don't need to tell your PCs exactly how many of them there were to begin with) and equip two or more of them with the clumsy, Damage 12 electrical projectors called Blitzenschlaggers (see Page 61 to learn more about these weapons). Make sure the Blitzenschlaggers all malfunction or explode before they fall into the Player Characters' hands!

GM's Options: What If the PCs Try to Take Down the Junta?

This adventure is set up with a fairly simple plot arc. Foil a bank robbery, learn about a sinister cult from one of the robbers, defeat the cult, learn about an even bigger occult menace, go to Transylvania, fight Death's Sting and a whole bunch of Nazis, go home in triumph. Things get a lot more complicated if the PCs attempt to overthrow a sitting government and deal with the aftermath.

Unless you would really like to play this out, you probably don't want the PCs to think there's a connection between the coup and the cult of Death's Sting before they set out for Romania, or they'll be likely to mistake your intentions and treat removing the coup's leaders as one of the mission objectives. They may have vague suspicions, which will surely grow worse once they arrive in Transylvania and start seeing the pins that some of the military officers wear. But they shouldn't know for sure that there's a connection unless they

make the mistake of going to the Transylvanian authorities for assistance.

We've added a built in time limit that will help keep your Players on the intended plot-line. If you sense that your players are wandering off track and getting ready to attack the Coup's leaders instead of heading for the fortress of Death's Sting, emphasize that they have JUST TWO DAYS in which to act.

After Death's Sting is defeated, all bets are off. The PCs will have plenty of time (unless you have some other crisis come up suddenly at home) and the regime may be actively hunting them If you don't want the Player Characters to spend a lot of time in Transylvania fighting off waves of soldiers and paramilitary forces, then let them escape the country quickly and cleanly. Then to give them some closure, let them hear on the news that the coup has suddenly collapsed, the Romanian armed forces have taken back Transylvania and there are disturbing indications that the coup's leaders (most of whom are now dead) were practicing some kind of awful occult rituals. Perhaps in some future scenario Lucian Tarcu or the Dragomir Twins can make it to America and attempt to inflict some kind of revenge on the PCs—but of course that's a different story.

If the PCs insist on going to Timosoara to free the Union of Greater Transylvania from its tyrannical masters, we have provided you with stats and descriptions for most of the opposition they might face. We haven't provided specific numbers on the troop strengths that the junta commands because like any combat scenario, you should scale the opposition to the PCs. Timisoara is a great place for a superhero battle. It's a beautiful old city with lots of great architecture and an ancient historic district at its heart. Look up and print out a map of Timosoara from the internet (Mapquest has a good one and so do plenty of other online services) and let the PCs show you the route they are taking into town. Give them an exciting running battle with a couple of tanks and combat helicopters, followed by a climactic battle in the elegant halls of the Ambassador hotel

Then, just when the PCs think they have the junta beat, Bogdan Iorga arrives with more tanks and Lucian Tarcu sends them a snarling challenge. *"Face me in my castle if you dare, or I'll wash my hands in the blood of your children!"*

The Romanian Army moves in to restore order as the PCs fight their way up the mountainside, cut down the Blood-Drinkers and wallop Colonel Tarcu thoroughly. Just as the PCs think they've won, Bogdan Iorga shows up at the head of his tank division. Surprise! He's come to surrender to the PCs and beg them for political asylum. Or something like that. Fiddle with the sequence to respond to whatever your PCs try to do.

Perhaps they try to infiltrate the coup's ranks, using shapeshifting, illusion or mind-control powers, and discover its diabolical secrets before things erupt into open warfare. Perhaps they mistake Lucian Tarcu for the real leader of the coup, and go up to fight him in his castle before they go to Timosoara.

The ordinary citizens of Transylvania may or may not rise up against their new overlords once they see the PCs start to win (remember that Timisoara is where the 1989 revolution began, and is fiercely proud of it), but they'll certainly give them a gratifying round of applause and carry them around on their shoulders once the fight is over. If they are instrumental in forcing the junta out of power, they will be local heroes in Transylvania for a long time to come (although the Iron Guard and some elements of the SRI will bear a grudge against them).

Avoid the temptation to make things as complicated as taking a government down is in real life. The PCs should not have to deal with organizing a resistance, coordinating different factions, trying to prevent excessive reprisals and the rise of new factions in the revolution's aftermath or any of the other complicated, messy things that happen when you displace a junta from power. That is, unless you want this to become the central focus of the campaign for many sessions to come.

AFTERMATH

If the heroes defeat Death's Sting, give them a few moments to savor their victory. However, unless they have miraculously come through that fight unscathed, then (assuming Kurtz survives) he will order his troops to attack them. If they are unscathed, then Kurtz will be too intimidated to attempt this, and he will order a total withdrawal. (Kurtz has also realized that the treasure he was sent to collect doesn't actually exist, which means that he definitely can't return to the past, even if he still has the time-travel device.)

If, on the other hand, Death's Sting defeats the heroes, then those who survive will awaken, bound, outside the castle gates. (You can assume that the Special Unit has made its attempt and been defeated while the heroes were unconscious.) Death's Sting is standing just inside the gate, staring at them with ill-concealed hunger. He growls (in Latin) *"Tell all the world that I have returned."* Then he vanishes back into the darkness, leaving the heroes to their own devices. (If they are foolish enough to attempt a rematch right then and there, he will show no mercy.)

Regardless, the heroes are now faced with the difficulty of getting out of Transylvania. Even if they rescued the villagers of Stegiocavar from the Special Unit, someone will have reported them to agents of the junta (there are always informers). If they've defeated Death's Sting, then his cultists will be understandably upset when they find out. Even if the heroes are making a narrow escape from a victorious monster, the leaders of the junta will want to have a few words with them. Of course, if the Special Unit is largely intact, the junta might have other problems to distract them from the heroes, as outlined below.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

If Ken Cantrick has survived his confrontation with the heroes, he may become a recurring foe–particularly if Death's Sting triumphs, in which case Cantrick will try to make his way to the monster's stronghold and offer him his services. Death's Sting has never been directly worshipped before, and may find it sufficiently flattering to train Cantrick in the arts of magic. Alternatively, if Barry Robinson has suffered any losses in the course of this adventure, then he might become the recurring villain and a disciple of Death's Sting.

The Transylvanian Junta will probably not last very long, unless they too make an arrangement with a surviving Death's Sting. (Cantrick will work against this, for he has a long-standing rivalry with the leaders of the European cult.) As an option, they might be overthrown by the Ubersoldaten, who (if Kurtz survives) will be attempting to carve out a realm as the foundation of a new Reich. Needless to say, whoever ends up in charge of the unit will be very interested in forging alliances with other villains who embrace Nazism.

If Death's Sting defeated the heroes, then he will now fall into the category of "looming threat". He will launch scheme after scheme to increase his diminished powers or to eliminate his new weaknesses. Where he was once content to only menace those who lived in the immediate vicinity of his fortress, now he will view the entire world as his hunting ground.

APPENDIX A: MAJOR NPCs

Ken Cantrick

PL: 8

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 26 (+8)
Initiative: 7 **Attack Bonus**: 8 **Defense:** 8 (+5 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 8 (4 without his Force Field) **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 6 **Willpower Save:** 13

Skills: Bluff 5 (+13), Concentration 7 (+12), Diplomacy 3 (+11), Gather Information 1 (+9), Intimidate 5 (+13), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 8 (+11), Notice 5 (+10), Perform (Oratory) 5 (+13), Profession (Cult Leader) 4 (+9), Search 3 (+8), Sense Motive 7 (+12), Stealth 5 (+8), Swim 5 (+5)
Feats: Diehard, Dodge Focus 3, Equipment 2 (10 pts worth), Fascinate, Improved Initiative, Inspire, Leadership, Minions 10 (see below for details), Sidekick 13 (a PL 6 and a PL 7 Sidekick—Marla Graves and Arnold Spangler. See their individual descriptions below), Sneak Attack, Startle, Taunt, Trance
Powers: Magical Force Field 8 (Extra: Impervious), Magic 8 (Spells: Hellfire Control, Suffocate [Extra: Range], Mind Control [Extra: Conscious], Summon [Extra: Heroic] Teleport [Range: 800 feet/ 2,000 miles; Extras: Accurate; Power Feats: Change Direction, Change Velocity, Easy]), Super-Senses (Magical Awareness, Detect Magic,
Equipment: Headquarters (Huge, 5 pts of toughness, has Living Space, a Library and a Gym; Cost: 6pts.)
Complications: Devoted to returning Death's Sting to the world and ruling at his side. Everything Ken does is purely a means to that ultimate goal, no sacrifice is too great to achieve it (except for his own survival).
Drawbacks: Action (takes five hours to use his Summoning power) -7pts.
Background: Cantrick stands about 5'8", and is skinny. His eyes are very dark, and strangely deep-looking. He dyes his hair blond. While he doesn't usually wear a costume, if encountered in the midst of his cultists he might be wearing a set of purple robes and an alligator-like headdress. When he isn't wearing ceremonial gear, he dresses to make an impression, usually in a long black coat and sinister looking, vaguely 19th century clothes (see the picture). He always speaks slowly and calmly, except during his sermons, when he lets his melodramatic tendencies run rampant. His personality is cold, cynical and calculating (and he's a bit of a coward, though he'd never admit it.)

He can murder without conscience and he's done it a number of times. Yet he doesn't kill people casually. He might get angry enough to kill one of his henchmen for failing him, but he wouldn't fly off the handle and butcher them on the spot in front of everybody. Instead he'll wait until he has them alone, has a plausible cover story, has a grave already dug for them,

and the rituals prepared for a human sacrifice. He doesn't have enough cultists to be able to sacrifice them on a regular schedule, and he wants to save anyone who will have to be eliminated for his next private blood-rite. Blood is a precious resource to him, and he wants to conserve it as much as he can.

Ken's frigid and calculating nature is evident in the way he runs his cult. The whole point in assembling them was to get enough resources and a big enough goon squad to find the *Liber Malerudorum* and retrieve it. Once he has pulled this off, he only needs them to protect him and give him a safe, isolated place to study the book. He isn't interested in his followers as individuals, nor does he get much thrill from dominating them. He doesn't even bother to date the pretty ones. It's all just a means to an end. It's true that he spends some time cultivating and brainwashing individual cultists (see the entries on Hubert Diggs and Tom Nording on pages 20 and 42, respectively) but that's just because he's looking for people who might be useful to assist with the assault on the bank. Running the cult's day-to-day affairs and managing all of its endless people-management issues took up too much of his time, so he found Marla Graves (see Page 33) and Arnold Spangler (see page 35) to handle this side of things for him.

Spartan and fastidious in his personal habits, he takes little interest in mundane things like food or romance. He eats enough to keep his body moving, without much caring about the flavor of his meals. He avoids romantic entanglements of even the most casual nature. Nor does he care much about accumulating wealth. Ken spent a number of years living out of his van, before he founded the present cult, and it taught him how to live without a lot of material possessions. The only luxury he indulges himself in is his collection of video games, and then he only likes the ones that contain a lot of pointless murder. His one real passion (apart from racking up a higher score on *"Unleashed Killers III"*) is the veneration of Death's Sting, and he intends to share the bounties of this worship with no one. His ultimate goal is to present himself to Death's Sting as a servant, and gain great power from his master.

Powers: Cantrick is a moderately powerful sorcerer. His only real limitation is his lack of access to information-gathering spells, which forces him to use more mundane means in this area. He can fling magical energy bolts, create powerful force screens, teleport from place to place, and even control the minds of others. Even without that last power, he is exceptionally, even supernaturally charismatic.

Tactics: Cantrick will prefer to withdraw from a fight and let his minions deal with an attacker, but if forced to fight, he will protect himself with his force screen and fling energy bolts at his enemies. Under no circumstances will he ever fight in melee. He will target weaker opponents first, particularly those who have already been injured in battle.

Obersturnfuhrer Rudolf Kurtz

PL: 11

Str: 28 (+9) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 20 (+5)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 8
Defense: 8 (+8 Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 11 (8 Flatfooted, 5 if caught Flatfooted and not wearing his body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 10 **Reflexes Save:** 10 **Willpower Save:** 12

Skills: Acrobatics 11 (+15), Bluff 10 (+13), Climb 2 (+11), Diplomacy 9 (+12), Drive 2 (+6), Gather Information 8 (+11), Intimidate 13 (+16), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 3 (+6), Knowledge (Tactics) 10 (+13), Languages 3 (English, French, Romanian), Notice 7 (+11), Profession (Soldier) 10 (+10), Search 6 (+9), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Stealth 5 (+9), Survival 5 (+9), Swim 6 (+15)

Feats: Assessment, Defensive Roll 3, Diehard, Distract, Evasion, Fearless, Improved Aim, Leadership, Master Plan, Startle, Taunt

Powers: Device (Body Armor [+3 Toughness]),Impervious Toughness 5, Super-Senses 2 (Acute Hearing, Low-Light Vision), Device (Time Machine) Regeneration 5 (Checks to recover from being Injured after one Standard Action worth of rest) Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 3,200 pounds)

Equipment: Gas Mask (Immunity to gas and poison attacks), Goggles (5pt Sensory Shield against Visual Dazzle Attacks), Semiautmoatic Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage), Bayonet (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), 3 "Potato Masher" Fragmentation Grenades (do 8 Damage to anything in a 15 foot radius)

Background: Kurtz was unusual in his reaction to the chemical treatments that created the Special Unit. He was not deformed by the experience, nor did he lose his memories, nor does he suffer the same weakness as the rest of the troopers. These "superior qualities" led to his becoming the commanding officer—there was no one else in the Special Unit who was capable of it. Unlike many German officers, Kurtz wasn't born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He was a street-thug in Dresden when the Nazis rose to power, and he joined the Party as a path to elevate himself. Kurtz was one of the amoral young hooligans the Nazis sent out to brutalize political opponents and intellectuals, and he did this job with such dedication and enthusiasm that the party leaders gave him a scholarship to a prestigious military academy and a series of distinguished postings with the SS. He was dependable and competent, and soon was entrusted with particularly delicate missions. The Special Unit is his best so far.

Obersturnfuhrer Kurtz is highly ambitious, and views his current posting as a stepping stone to greater things. While he is staggered to learn that the Reich was defeated, he will ultimately come to view this as an opportunity to gain more personal power. Unsentimental to a fault, he is ruthless enough to make even some of his fellow SS officers uncomfortable around him. While he has unquestioningly absorbed the "master race" dogma of the Nazis, he views it and most other beliefs as simply tools of power, useful for motivating followers, rather than actual "truths". This actually makes him more dangerous than a lot of Nazis, since he won't automatically underestimate an opponent from the "lower

races." If he survives this adventure, Kurtz will become an independent force of evil. He'll lie low with his remaining troopers until he can gather more information about the strange new world of the Twenty-First Century. Once he feels confident enough, he'll start trying to acquire money and power. He may or may not ally himself with other Nazi and neo-Nazi groups, depending on what is convenient. He might hire himself and his troopers out to some third world dictatorship as mercenaries, depending on how badly he needs money.

If the time machine has survived, then Kurtz will eventually want to use it to alter the course of history and make himself some kind of world leader or billionaire. He won't do this immediately, however. He knows that he first needs to study the time machine, figure out how it works, and make sure he has enough fuel and spare parts to get back from the past once he's changed it. This will take resources, a safe place to work undisturbed, and a lot of money. Securing these things will be his first objective. Only after he has them will he get to work on changing the past.

He's perversely proud of his thuggish, low-class Dresden accent and has never attempted to lose it. This is not obvious to anyone who isn't a fluent speaker of German. When he speaks English, he sounds pretty much the same as any grim Nazi officer.

Tactics: As competent a soldier as any of the troopers he leads, Kurtz generally commands from the rear, but will not hesitate to directly engage heroes if he thinks he can win. Not a coward, he is a tactician who knows when to withdraw and when to hold the line. He has no sense of fair play, and is interested only in winning. No tactic is too ruthless for him to employ, provided that it is effective. While he has a temper, he will not keep attacking an obviously superior force no matter how badly he has been insulted or humiliated. He isn't prepared to throw his own life away for anyone or anything.

Death's Sting

PL: 15

Str: 30/ 20 (+10/+5) **Dex:** 20 (+5) **Con:** 20 (+5) **Int:** 20 (+5) **Wis:** 24 (+7) **Cha:** 20 (+5)
Initiative: +13 **Attack Bonus**: 15
Defense: 12 (+10 Flatfooted) **Toughness Save:** 15 (**+**12 **Flatfooted) Fortitude Save:** n/a **Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 16

Skills: Intimidate 15 (+20), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 15 (+20), Knowledge (History) 3 (+8), Notice 8 (+13), Stealth 8 (+13)
Feats: All-Out Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Distract, Dodge Focus 5, Fearless, Fearsome Presence 10, Improved Initiative 2, Improved Grapple, Improved Overrun, Improved Pin, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Ritualist, Sneak Attack, Startle, Takedown Attack
Powers: Emotion Control 10 (Extras: Area [50 foot Burst around his current position]; Flaw: Limited-one emotion [Fear]), Enhanced Strength 20, Immunity 30 (Immune to all Fortitude effects), Impervious Toughness 12, Mimic 15 (Mimics only powers with the descriptor "Magic"; Extras: Continuous, Extra Subject, Stacking; Flaws: Limited [Only works on subjects that he has already done damage to with his claws or teeth], Limited [Does not work on powers contained in magical Devices], Overload, Resisted [Subject can make a Willpower Save to resist the effect, if they succeed, Death's Sting cannot attempt to Mimic them again for another 24 hours, and

he will need to damage them again to attempt it]), Strike 2 (Extra: Mighty), Super-Movement (Wall-Crawling) 2
Drawbacks: Weakness (Sunlight, major, per round, destroyed in 5 rounds) 10 pts.
Background: Nearly seven feet tall, but hunches over so much that he seems shorter. He is skeletally thin, with clawed fingers and sharp teeth, and bright glowing yellow eyes that stare out at the world with endless, limitless hated. Even Death's Sting does not know how old Death's Sting is, or from whence he came. His greatest joy is making others fear him, with acquiring greater power coming in a close second. When forced to self-destruction, long ago, he knew that he would be much weaker when he returned, and so his immediate goal will be to regain his lost might. Everyone is either an obstacle or a pawn to him, and he destroys obstacles without hesitation.
Tactics: Death's Sting is incredibly strong, fast and tough, and able to do terrifying amounts of damage with his claws and fangs. His actual powers have greatly diminished from what they once were, however. He no longer has access to any of his once formidable spells, for example. He can still project a wave of terror that can panic his foes, crawl on walls or ceilings as though he were a spider, and he can steal the mystical powers of others. This last requires that he consume the blood of his enemy, though he doesn't have to do this with a conventional, "vampiric bite"—any claw attack that damages a magic-using opponent will give him enough blood to accomplish the task. His one real vulnerability is to the rays of the sun, which will destroy him in short order. Death's Sting's fighting style is discussed in Chapter Seven. He is especially fond of using magical powers against the people from whom he stole them, often doing so in ways that they would not have thought of themselves. He will also use them as a means of self-preservation–for example, if he steals the power to create a cloud of darkness from someone, he will use it to shield himself from the sun's rays.

The White Eagle

PL: 13
Real Name: Unknown

Str: 40/20 (+15/+5) **Dex:** 14 (+2)
Con: 18 (+4) **Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 10 (+0)
Cha: 14 (+2) **Initiative:** 2
Attack Bonus: 10 **Defense:** 10
Toughness Save: 13 (Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 13 **Reflexes Save:** 13
Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+8), Intimidate 5 (+7), Notice 8 (+8)
Feats: Improved Grapple, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Takedown Attack
Powers: Enhanced Strength 20, Flight 7, Immunity (Aging, plus Life Support), Impervious Toughness 4, Protection (Extra: Impervious) 6, Super-Strength 8 (Power Feats: Shockwave, Thunderclap), Ressurection (Reincarnation)
Complications: Amnesiac, totally committed to defending and serving Romania.
Background: The White Eagle is a purely optional character who you can throw at the PCs if you need to make their lives more difficult. He doesn't need to get involved in the scenario at all. In fact, he doesn't even

need to exist in your game universe. But if the PCs violate Romania's airspace illegally and you need something more powerful than a few attack helicopters to come spar with them, here he is.

The White Eagle is Romania's national superhero and one of its great symbols. He wears a costume in the same colors as the Romanian flag. He isn't sure where his powers come from or how long he's been using them to protect Romania. In fact he can only ever seem to remember about the past ten years of his life. Nor is he very curious about it. Mostly he's focused on the present, on facing the next foreign threat or natural disaster.

The truth is that he's been defending his native land at least since World War Two, which means that, like Romania itself, he fought on both sides of that conflict, first for the Nazis and then against them. After VE Day the Allies couldn't decide whether to call him a war criminal or a hero of freedom and when he "turned Communist" they decided it would be less embaressing if they just stopped talking about him altogether. As a result, few western superheroes have ever heard of the White Eagle.

In fact he never became a Communist, nor was he ever a Fascist or anything else. He has always prided himself on staying above the political tide, which oddly means he's always been swept along with it. He fought for the fascist government of Antinescu and then for King Michael and then for Ceaucescu, protecting his country in the name of whoever happened to be running it.

He no longer remembers the revolution that overthrew Ceaucescu and vaguely hopes that he didn't do anything he should regret (on those rare occasions when he bothers to think about it at all). But in fact he needn't worry. After a brief, unsuccesseful attempt to quell the rioters in Timosoara (by talking to them), he took no part in the revolution at all and he has faithfully served each of the following governments.

At the moment he isn't doing anything about the coup in Transylvania, because the government hasn't asked him to, yet. He will however try to stop anyone who invades his country's airspace during this crisis and if they get past him he will doggedly hunt them down, turning up whenever it's least convenient.

Honorable to a fault, he won't strike from ambush, hit a foe from behind or strike an opponent who is already badly injured. He always issues a warning before he hits someone. He won't ever hit a woman unless she has hit him first—and even then he doesn't like doing it. He does not speak any language but Romanian and knows little about the world outside his home country.

Decent to a fault, he would make a great ally against Death's Sting. But the PCs have broken the law by sneaking into Romania, and he can't see past that fact. He will stubbornly attempt to bring them to justice no matter what they do, even if they have some way of making him understand what they are saying.

What is he, really? In fact he's a kind of psychic projection of the Romanian national spirit. He's been around a lot longer than the 20th century, but he wasn't nearly this powerful until the 1930s. Nor did he start wearing a superhero costume until every nation's heroes started doing it, and the concept became part of the culture. Every once in a while some loyal son of Romania will discover the magic word that summons the White Eagle from their collective national unconcious and become him for a decade or so.

Right now he's really a starving ten-year-old foundling from one of the infamous state-run orphanages. Like a lot of those kids, he doesn't have a name, just an ID number (AG-99212, in his case). If he ever says his ID number aloud and turns back into his real self, he will discover to his surprise that he died of tuburculosis two years ago, and the White Eagle will vanish like a soap bubble until the next time someone learns the secret word.

APPENDIX B: MILITARY FORCES OF THE NEW TRANSYLVANIA

Soldier of the New Transylvania (Infantryman)
PL: 3

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**:3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 3 (+1 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 3 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Climb 2 (+3), Intimidate 2 (+2), Knowledge (Tactics) 4 (+4), Medicine 2 (+3), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Soldier) 4 (+5), Stealth 1 (+2), Survival 3 (+4)
Feats: Assessment, Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 4 (20 pts. of equipment)
Equipment: Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage[Extra: Autofire]), Binoculars (Telescopic Vision), Cammo Clothing (+5 to Stealth Checks in the forest), may or may not have up to three Grenades (4 Damage, 15 foot radius, DC 15 to evade)
Complications: Subject to orders from superiors.
Background: More loyal to their individual commanders than to any coherent vision of a "Greater Transylvania" these infantrymen and tankers are a varied lot. Some are consummate professional soldiers, who would never act inappropriately toward civilians unless ordered to, while others are sadistic thugs with guns who like ordering regular folks around. They have all been ordered to put fear into the civilian population in the big towns, keeping things tamped down for a few days while the coup leaders consolidate their power, so they make a point of hassling ordinary people. This makes them look less disciplined than they really are. Only a very few infantrymen are members of the cult of Death's Sting, though nearly half of them suspect that something like the cult exists.

Soldier of the New Transylvania (Sniper)

PL: 6

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 7 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 6 (+1 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 6

Skills: Climb 6 (+7), Intimidate 3 (+3), Knowledge (tactics) +4 (+5), Notice 8 (+10), Profession (Soldier) 4 (+5), Stealth 7 (+10), Survival 6 (+8)
Feats: Connected, Defensive Roll 5, Elusive Target, Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment), Improved Aim, Improved Critical (With Sniper Rifle), Improved Initaitive, Sneak Attack, Track
Equipment: Sniper Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage), Cammo Clothing (+5 to Stealth

Checks in the forest), GPS Locator (+5 to navigate with a Survival check, can only be used outdoors)
Complications: Subject to orders from superiors.
Background: Like any large modern army, Romania employs snipers—expert marksmen who work behind enemy lines with a minimum of support. There is no specific point in the scenario where the PCs have to encounter a sniper, but if the GM would like to throw one at them (if for example they have the bad luck to get surrounded by the Romanian police and besieged in some enclosed area) then here are some stats.

Like a lot of professional snipers, he was probably an expert shot long before he ever joined the army, and in all likelihood has been hunting since he was old enough to physically lift a rifle. Either that or he was raised in a Securitate facility and spent every day on the range since early childhood.

Soldier of the New Transylvania (Tanker)
PL: 4

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**:3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 1
Fortitude Save: 4 **Reflexes Save:** 4
Willpower Save: 4

Skills: Craft (Mechanical) 2 (+2), Drive 2 (+3), Intimidate 3 (+3), Knowledge (Tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+5), Profession (Soldier) 4 (+5), Survival 3 (+4)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment)
Equipment: Binoculars (Telescopic Vision), Machine Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage [Extra: Autofire])
Complications: Subject to orders from superiors.
Background: Romania's leaders were taken by surprise when the coup began, and barely had time to react. They did manage to send the tank brigade under Bogdan Iorga into Cluj to stop the coup. Instead he joined them, and took his men and tanks with him. Loyal mostly to their beloved commander, the tankers sit in their vehicles at major intersections in the bigger towns and try to look threatening. They don't have enough fuel in reserve to do much else, for now. The tankers are even less likely to be active members of the cult of Death's Sting than the infantrymen, though there are a few among their officers. Morale is starting to run low among the tankers, and the GM should make them a little easier to bribe or coerce than the infantrymen, paratroopers or paramilitary units—provided that you can find one out of his tank.

Romanian Army Tank
Strength: 50
Speed: 4
Defense: 8
Toughness: 11 (6 Impervious)
Size: Huge
Weapons: Main Gun (Ranged Weapon, 10 damage, [Extra: Explosion]), Heavy Anti-Personnel Machine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 6 damage, [Extra: Autofire])
Description: Contrary to what you might expect, this is not an old Soviet model. Romania has been making its own tanks for years now and they are both faster and lighter than the ancient Russian hand-me-downs they once used. While it's a fearsome weapon, it probably doesn't have enough fuel to chase the PCs very far. For the most part the tankers are under orders to hold their position and defend it, driving as little as possible and using their tanks almost like fixed fortifications. It takes a full-round action to climb into a tank or to start up its engine.

Soldier of the New Transylvania (Officer)
PL: 4

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**:4 **Defense:** 4
Toughness Save: 4 (+1 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 4 **Reflexes Save:** 4
Willpower Save: 4

Skills: Intimidate 3 (+4), Knowledge (Tactics) 6 (+7), Notice 4 (+5), Profession

(Soldier) 4 (+5), Search 3 (+4), Stealth 2 (+3), Survival 3 (+4)
Feats: Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 2 (10 pts of Equipment)
Equipment: Binoculars (Telescopic Vision), Cammo Clothing (+5 to Stealth Checks in the forest), GPS Locater (+5 to navigate with a Survival check, can only be used outdoors), Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage), Walkie-Talkie (Communication, 20 mile range)
Complications: Subject to orders from superiors.
Background: A standard template for an officer in the Romanian army. You can use these stats for either an infantry or a tank officer. Most of the officers involved in the coup are participating out of loyalty to their commanders and/or the hope of being given a place of authority in the new regime. Only a few are secret worshippers of Death's Sting.

The Blood-Drinkers

PL: 6

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 5 (+1 without body armor)
Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 4

Skills: Intimidate 6 (+7), Medicine 2 (+3), Knowledge (tactics) +4 (+5), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (Soldier) 5 (+6), Search +3 (+4), Sense Motive 4 (+5), Stealth 6 (+7)
Feats: Equipment 4 (20 pts. of equipment)
Equipment: Body Armor (+5 Toughness), Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage [Extra: Autofire]),
Complications: Subject to orders from superiors, fanatically loyal to Lucian Tarcu and to Death's Sting.
Background: The best men from Lucian Tarcu's paratrooper regiment, now his cultists and his personal bodyguards. He has made imposing new uniforms for them. They are black with red piping, and have black berets which bear the symbol of Death's Sting.

These commandos are the best-trained men in the coup's army, but everyone else is so afraid of Colonel Tarcu that they never use the Blood-Drinkers for much of anything. Every one of these men has been initated into the cult of Death's Sting by their commander. They will gladly commit any atrocity or lay down their lives for Lucian Tarcu, or for Death's Sting.

SRI Security Officer
PL: 4

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 4 **Defense:** 4
Toughness Save: 4 (+1 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 5
Willpower Save: 5

Skills: Intimidate 7 (+8), Gather Information 5 (+6), Investigate +4 (+5), Notice 4 (+6), Profession (Secret Policeman) 5 (+6), Search +3 (+5), Sense Motive 6 (+7), Stealth 4 (+5)
Feats: Connected, Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment)
Equipment: Machine Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage [Extra: Autofire]), GPS Locater (+5 to navigate with a Survival check, can only be used outdoors), Satellite Phone
Background: After Securitate was

dismantled, the new state reorganized its internal security forces into two branches, SRI, which was placed in charge of espionage, counter-espionage, and maintaining the loyalty of military units (sort of like the duties of the old Soviet KGB), and UM-0215, which was in charge of combatting organized crime, terrorism and political sedition (sort of like the FBI). Both agencies have a lot of ex-Securitate personnel in their ranks, but they hate eachother and work to screw each other up whenever possible—largely because they support different political parties.

SRI is much bigger and much better funded than UM-0215, with its own paramilitary units and perhaps as many as 40,000 agents. There are three divisions in SRI. Division A handles foreign espionage, Division C handles domestic security and Division E is assigned to maintaining the loyalty of the Romanian military.

Effectively the Prime Minster's personal army, they function without any civilian oversight at all, and pledge their loyalty not to Romania's parliament, government or constitution, but to the person of the Prime Minister himself. It's not hard to see that this would inevitably make them a tool of political repression, and encourage them to trample on the rights of the citizenry. And in fact they have been involved in numerous public scandals, wiretapping, blackmailing and bullying members of the opposition party.

Marius Vladu was an influential officer in Division E, and he brought most of his subordinates into the coup with him. They are well-trained, and very loyal. Most hope to be given more power and authority under the new regime.

The PCs might or might not encounter an agent of SRI in the course of their adventure. The stats listed above are for a typical member of Division E, a sort of "political officer" assigned to monitor the loyalty of troops in the field. He's probably in uniform, dressed as an infantry officer. He probably isn't a member of the cult of Death's Sting. While nearly a third of SRI's personnel were recruited from Securitate, these were mostly commanders and civilian administrators. The majority of the orphaned killers who made up the organization's rank and file were left out in the cold.

Ex-Securitate Thug
PL: 5

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 5 **Defense:** 5
Toughness Save: 5 (+2 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 5
Willpower Save: 5

Skills: Disable Device 3 (+5), Intimidate 8 (+9), Gather Information 5 (+6), Investigate +4 (+5), Notice 4 (+6), Profession (Secret Policeman) 5 (+6), Search +3 (+5), Sense Motive 4 (+6), Stealth 6 (+8)
Feats: Connected, Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment)
Equipment: Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage [Extra: Autofire]),
Complications: Doesn't like the Iron Guard, but feels compelled to work with them for now.
Background: Securitate was one of the world's most feared paramilitary organizations, and with good reason. Ceaucescu found his agents in the state orphanage system, and raised them to be killers from earliest childhood. They had no parents but him, no loyalty to anything but the state. Then he died and the state collapsed. A lot of Securitate's best killers died in the 100 Day Revolution and a lot of others fled the country. The rest have had trouble adapting to civilian life. Many have gotten involved with organized crime or political thuggery. Some have begun to hear the call of Death's Sting.

When Marius Vladu put the word out that he was about to take part in a coup, former Securitate killers flooded in from all corners of the world, eager to play a role in his new order. Some were mercenaries, some were gangsters, some worked crummy day jobs and dreamed about the glorious past. He promised them positions of power, perhaps a new security role like the one they used to play under their

beloved Ceaucescu. They owe their primary loyalty to Colonel Vladu himself, and if there were ever a rift in the coup's leadership they would unquestioningly take his side.

Although your average ex-Securitate agent hasn't undergone any paramilitary training in a decade, and has skills that are starting to get a little rusty, they're still extremely competent—born killers. The Iron Guard hates them and used to hunt them down when they could, but now an uneasy truce prevails between them.

The Iron Guard
PL: 3

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 3 (+1 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 3 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Climb 4 (+6), Intimidate 4 (+4), Knowledge (tactics) +4 (+5), Notice 5 (+6), Profession (miner or farmer) 4 (+5), Ride 3 (+5), Stealth 5 (+6), Survival 5 (+6)
Feats: Connected, Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 4 (20 pts. of equipment), Sneak Attack, Track
Equipment: Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage [Extra: Autofire]), Binoculars (Telescopic Vision)
Complications: Doesn't like Securitate, but feels compelled to work with them for now.
Background: The Iron Guard is a mysterious and frequently misunderstood organization. A militant nationalist group with mystical overtones, they have played a paradoxical role in Romania's history. Staunchly monarchist, they nonetheless fought the autocratic government of Carol II as often as they supported it. Anti-Semitic, anti communist and pro-fascist, they also fought with Romania's fascist Prime Minister Ion Antinescu as often as they fought his enemies. Heavily Pro-Nazi (some of them even trained with the Wehrmacht and the SS), they were nonetheless fiercely at odds with Romania's German-speaking minority. It's hard to say precisely what they stand for, although it's easy to say what they stand against—socialism, liberalism, women's rights, foreigners and Jews.

When they were founded, back in 1930, they were a classic European fascist movement, with torchlight marches and martial songs. Their membership included a lot of right wing students and army veterans. These days, after long years of persecution by the Communist authorities, they have become almost exclusively a rural phenomenon, comprised of miners and farmers from the mountainous north. Sons are initiated into the Legion's mysteries by their fathers, who teach them its secret rituals and violent history. Not all of the current Legionnaires support the Transylvanian junta, but enough of them do to give the coup's leaders a lot of extra muscle.

A typical Iron Guardsman is a miner or farmer between twenty and sixty years of age, with a few years of service in the regular army and a high school education. They aren't as disciplined as the regular troops, but they also know the territory a lot better. Most of them have been rambling around these mountains since they were children. They don't wear uniforms, but any Legionnaire of the Iron Guard can identify himself to another with a series of coded gestures.

The Dragomir twins have a lot of influence with the Iron Guard's leadership. Their family has always been deeply involved in the organization and they are the last heirs. There also seems to have been a prophecy circulating among some units of the Guard, to the effect that a pair of twins will one day be born who will bring Romania's patron Saints back to life. This is only half wrong.

Elite Iron Guardsman
PL: 6

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 6 (+1 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 6

Skills: Climb 6 (+8), Intimidate 6 (+6), Knowledge (tactics) +4 (+5), Notice 8 (+10), Profession (miner or farmer) 4 (+5), Ride 3 (+5), Stealth 5 (+6), Survival 7 (+8)
Feats: Connected, Defensive Roll 5, Equipment 4 (20 pts. of equipment), Improved Aim, Sneak Attack, Track
Equipment: Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage [Extra: Autofire]), Commando Knife (Melee Weapon, 2 Damage)
Complications: Doesn't like Securitate, but feels compelled to work with them for now.
Background: Occasionally you will find a member of the Iron Guard with more military training than most. Here is a template for a former member of Romania's elite special forces. He has a pretty formidable combination of woodsmanship and commando training. The leaders of the coup like to keep as many of these elite Legionnaires around them as possible. An ever-increasing number now worship Death's Sting.

Attack Helicopter
Strength: 40
Speed: 7
Defense: 5
Toughness: 10
Size: Gargantuan
Weapons: Heavy Machine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 6 Damage [Extra: Autofire]), Rockets (Ranged Weapon, 9 damage [Extra: Explosion])
Description: If the PCs invade the Union of Greater Transylvania's airspace, they will be threatened with getting shot down by fighter jets. That's an empty boast—the mutineers don't actually have any working jet fighters. They do have some attack helicopters, and they'll send these after the PCs instead.

Tailor the number of helicopters to the size and strength of the party, and bear in mind that they should win this fight—the climactic battle of the scenario should be with Death's Sting, not some helicopters on the Transylvanian border.

Agent of UM 0215

PL: 4

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 4 **Defense:** 4
Toughness Save: 4 (+1 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 4 **Reflexes Save:** 4
Willpower Save: 4

Skills: Intimidate 5 (+6), Gather Information 7 (+8), Investigate +7 (+8), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 4 (+5), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (Secret Policeman) 5 (+7), Search 6 (+7), Sense Motive 7 (+8), Stealth 5 (+6)
Feats: Connected, Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment)
Equipment: Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage), Wooden Stakes (Melee Weapon +3), Cellular Phone
Background: The poor stepchild of the Romanian intelligence services, UM 0215 (the name stands for "Military Unit 0215") gets little respect from its rival, SRI. Their purview is domestic security and organized crime—something like the role the FBI plays in American life.

They were formed out of Securitate's Directorate IV, the most underfunded and least powerful division, which had exactly the same duties before the 1989 revolution toppled Ceaucescu from power. They backed the new "Salvation

Front" government after the revolution, and found themselves on the outs when a more conservative political party came to power thereafter. Prime Minister Illescu relied heavily on the Iron Guard as muscle, and since infiltrating and destroying the Iron Guard was always one of the Fourth Directorate's primary duties, they were not in the new Prime Minster's good graces. He drastically expanded their rival agency, SRI, and made sure it was officially loyal only to the Prime Minister's office. Yet across the country, in little district offices, UM 0215 toils on in the never-ending war against organized crime. They still fight the Iron Guard where they can, although unlike SRI they have no paramilitary units to fall back on, and have to work with the local police to make arrests. Which brings us to the special duties UM0215 has acquired. As the agency tasked with rooting out domestic organized crime, the Fourth Directorate soon found itself investigating supernatural criminals. If vampires exist in your game, then these are the government's underfunded, undereqipped vampire-hunters.

After the coup in Transylvania, Marius Vladu moved quickly to raid all the district offices and arrest every member of UM 0215 his men could lay their hands on, particularly if they had worked on supernatural investigations. He was partly successful, but he didn't get every last one. A few of Division X's agents struggle on, short on resources and ammunition. They suspect that something big and supernatural is happening and they're determined to at least attempt to put a stop to it, despite the impossible odds.

The PCs may or may not ever encounter an agent of UM 0215. We provide you with this material primarily so that if the PCs find themselves stuck, or are missing a crucial piece of information, an agent can present themselves to the PCs, explain to them that they're working on the same case and give the PC whatever critical piece of information they are missing (that it isn't safe to go talk to the coup's leaders, for example, or that Death's Sting may be vulnerable to sunlight). A typical agent of UM 0215's Division X looks rueful and weary, with a cynical smile and well-worn clothes. They are pretty efficient at hunting down supernatural monsters, but the job doesn't pay very well, and it shows in the way they dress. Precisely how much they know about the current crisis is up to the GM. It's all a question of what information you want to feed to the PCs.

Romanian Police Officer
PL: 3

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**:3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 4 (+1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 3
Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Drive 2 (+3), Investigate 5 (+6), Medicine 2 (+2), Notice 5 (+6), Profession (Police Officer) 5 (+6), Sense Motive 4 (+5)
Feats: Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Improved Grapple, Quick-Draw
Equipment: Nightstick (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 3 Damage)
Background: There is no specific point in this adventure at which the PCs have to encounter any Romanian cops, but it could easily happen. Use this template for a border patrol officer, a town constable or a highway patrolman—whichever the PCs happen to stumble across. Just trying to do his job and muddle through, despite the uncertain political times, he feels no particular loyalty to the coup or its leaders. There is only a 1/3 chance that he's ever heard of Death's Sting, and if he has, it's only as yet another creepy legend that the mountain folk tell.

Leaders of the Coup

It's unlikely that the PCs will ever face the coup's leaders directly, but just in case the story takes that kind of unexpected turn, here are some stats and descriptions for them.

Major Constantin Dragomir

PL: 7

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 7 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 7 (+1 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 7

Skills: Bluff 7 (+10), Climb 2 (+3), Diplomacy 8 (+11), Intimidate 7 (+10), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+4), Knowledge (Tactics) 6 (+9), Medicine 2 (+3), Notice 6 (+9), Perform (Oratory), 7 (+10), Profession (Military Officer) 8 (+11), Sense Motive 9 (+12), Stealth 8 (+9), Survival 3 (+4)

Feats: Assessment, Benefit (Leader of the Coup), Connected, Defensive Roll 6, Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Inspire, Leadership

Powers: Mind Control 7 (Extra: Concious), Telepathy 7 (Flaw: Only works on his brother)

Equipment: Machine Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage[Extra: Autofire]), Binoculars (Telescopic Vision), Cammo Clothing (+5 to Stealth Checks in the forest)

Complications: Fanatical devotee of Death's Sting, does whatever his brother tells him to.

Background: Among some of the older and more isolated units of the Iron Guard, there is a prophecy that one day a pair of identical twins will be born, who will bring the rightful king back to power and restore Romania's soul. Some branches of that mysterious, violent and mystical secret society hold the prophecy to be rubbish, while many have never even heard of it, but there is a sizable faction who are devoted to the legend. The prophecy is only half right, we fear.

Thirty years ago the Dragomir twins were born, in the mining country near Resita, and their birth was attended by all sorts of ominous portents and signs. Patients in the state mental institutions battered themselves to death against the walls, an unpredicted lunar eclipse was visible across the Banat region (and nowhere else!) and a vast flock of ravens settled over the district hospital where they were being delivered, crowing "The King Comes! The Feasting will be good!" The Iron Guard took note.

The twins' mother died giving birth to them, and their father was swiftly made to vanish, so the Iron Guard could give them into the care of one of their most prominent families—the Dragomirs. Once members of the officer caste, the Dragomirs had fallen onto hard times under the Communists, but even though they had been reduced to working in the mines they retained their dignity and were still a force to reckoned with among the Iron Guard. The boys were taught that they had a glorious destiny and grew up cruel and spoiled, able to brutalize other children without fear of reprisals. If they hurt another child and his parents complained, huge burly miners would come persuade them to rethink their position. They killed their first man at the age of nine.

Ever since they were old enough to talk, both twins had been hearing Death's Sting call to them in their dreams. At first they thought he was the lost King of Romania, who they had been would one day return (with their help). By the time they were nine, it was clear to them that he was something far older and more terrible. They told their favorite "Uncle", who reacted with shock and loathing, so they killed him—their first sacrifice to Death's Sting. No one ever found his corpse, which they left at the bottom of a ravine. After this incident they learned to exploit the Iron Guard's reverence without believing very much in their credo. The two of them served a better master.

While Ceaucescu was in power, the twins could never have hoped to become military officers. The name Dragomir was known to the Communist authorities and regarded with some suspicion. The 1989 revolution came along at exactly the right

moment for the twins. Shortly thereafter, Prime Minister Ion Illescu came to power ad he was eager to exploit the Iron Guard and other far-right-wing groups for his own political ends. The twins' many "uncles" scraped together enough money to send them off to a military academy and their future seemed assured.

At the academy, they met Radu Cozma and this poor fat boy immediately became their acolyte. Terrified of the twins and of the powers that their master had given them, he was both the brunt of their cruel jokes and their best friend. He even convinced himself that Death's Sting was speaking to him in his own dreams, too. Both twins grew up to became influential officers in the Romanian Army and they took Radu along with them for the ride. They have maintained and strengthened their connections with the Iron Guard and have brought in a lot of members of this shadowy group as paramilitary troops now that the coup is complete.

They used to kill another human being every few years as a sacrifice to Death's Sting and to maintain their powers Usually they picked someone who had slighted them in their childhood. Careful about disposing of the bodies, they have never been suspected.

Constantin is the more outgoing of the twins and he appears to be the dominant one. This is misleading. In fact his brother Adrian is the real visionary of the two and comes up with most of their ideas—he just speaks through Constantin. Sadistic, fanatical devotees of Death's Sting, the twins are capable of any atrocity you might care to name, but they are extremely crafty, cynical and cunning in their evil. They always act cautiously and cover their tracks with care.

An accomplished liar, Constantin always seems to wear a schoolyard bully's amused grin. He is jovial and threatening, always aware of just how scared he wants his underlings to be and always careful not to push things too far. He has subordinates shot a little more casually than a responsible commander would, but he never directly gives the order himself. Because he's always grinning like a wolf, it's impossible to tell if he's about to pin a medal on your chest or have you killed—or both!

Major Adrian Dragomir
PL: 7

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 7 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 7 (+1 flatfooted)
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 7

Skills: Bluff 7 (+9), Climb 2 (+3), Diplomacy 8 (+10), Intimidate 7 (+9), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+4), Knowledge (Tactics) 6 (+9), Medicine 2 (+3), Notice 6 (+10), Perform (Oratory), 7 (+9), Profession (Military Officer) 8 (+11), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Stealth 8 (+9), Survival 3 (+4)
Feats: Assessment, Benefit (Leader of the Coup), Connected, Defensive Roll 6, Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Inspire, Leadership
Powers: Mind Control 7 (Extra: Concious), Telepathy 7 (Extras: Alternate Powers [Communication, Mind Control, Mental Blast])
Complications: Fanatical devotee of Death's Sting
Background: The more visionary one of the Dragomir twins, he seems quieter and more passive than his leering brother, but in fact he's the dominant one. Adrian always been the dreamy, quiet half of the pair, wrapped up in his visions and dreams of glory. He's also the one who comes up with most of their plans. He has a stronger connection to Death's Sting than anyone else alive and can hear his voice more clearly.

When he was a Major in the Romanian Army he was good at giving orders and talking to his superiors (his natural talent for lying and false sincerity served him well here, as it did his brother). Now that he's with his brother all the time, it's easier to let him do most of the talking.

He grins a lot, just like Constantin and has an eerie habit of finishing his brother's sentences, or echoing him so that they seem to be speaking as one. Cruel but

careful, he enjoys hurting people but knows not to let that impulse run away with him. He will never directly threaten anyone with death, or for that matter order them killed, but he's pretty good at doing it subtly.

His powers are stronger than his brother's but he knows that he wouldn't be up to fighting a superhero with them. He will avoid direct combat with superhumans if at all possible, leading from the rear as much as he can. This is not so much cowardice as it is a desire to carry on the work of Death's Sting.

Brigadeer Radu Cozma
PL: 6

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 4 (+3 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 5 **Reflexes Save:** 6 **Willpower Save:** 4

Skills: Bluff 7 (+9), Climb 2 (+3), Diplomacy 8 (+10), Intimidate 7 (+9), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 1 (+4), Knowledge (Tactics) 6 (+9), Medicine 2 (+3), Notice 6 (+10), Perform (Oratory), 7 (+9), Profession (Military Officer) 8 (+11), Sense Motive 8 (+12), Stealth 8 (+9), Survival 3 (+4)
Feats: Assessment, Benefit (Leader of the Coup), Connected, Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Master Plan, Skill Mastery (Gather Information, Knowledge [Tactics], Notice, Profession [Military Officer])
Equipment: Body Armor (4 Toughness), Large Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage)
Complications: Fanatically loyal to the Dragomir Twins, frightened all the time.
Background: The Dragomir Twins' cringing toady, he has followed their brilliant military career in their shadow since he was a cadet. He met them in his first year of military academy in 1990 and he has been alternately terrified of and in awe of them ever since. Without the twins, he was a fat, timid nothing. With them, he is somebody—even though it means putting up with their abuse and bearing witness to their terrifying crimes. He was the first person they initiated into the cult of Death's Sting and he has been practicing it for so long and with so much zeal that he has convinced himself that he hears Death's Sting calling to him in his sleep, too.

Despite his lack of physical bravery, he has a keen organizational mind and a positive genius for logistics. This has made him popular with his men, although he lacks personal charisma. He handles most of the operational details of running the Union of Greater Transylvania, although even his formidable skills won't be able to keep things going indefinitely.

Loud and somewhat oafish, he talks non-stop when he gets nervous, which is most of the time. His furry eyebrows grow together into a single "unibrow" no matter how often he plucks them. His pudgy face is always covered with five-o-clock shadow and sweat. Like a lot of people who have been bullied, he is capable of impulsive acts of terrible cruelty, but most of the time he is too scared to be actively sadistic. He's also too self-absorbed in his constant dread to feel any trace of sympathy for anyone else. He thought he would stop being scared all the time once the return of Death's Sting grew close. Instead he's more scared than ever.

Colonel Marius Vladu
PL: 7

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 5 **Attack Bonus**: 7 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 6 (+2 without body armor)
Fortitude Save: 3 **Reflexes Save:** 1
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Climb 6 (+9), Drive 4 (+6), Intimidate 6 (+8), Medicine 2 (+3), Knowledge (tactics) +8 (+9), Notice 7 (+8), Profession (secret policeman) 4 (+6), Sense Motive 7 (+9), Stealth 5 (+7)
Feats: Chokehold, Equipment 4 (20 pts. of equipment), Fearless, Improved Aim, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Inspire, Leadership, Precise Shot, Startle
Equipment: Body Armor (4 Toughness), Submachine Gun (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage [Extra: Autofire]), Commando Knife (Melee Weapon, 3 Damage), Cammo Clothing (+5 to Stealth Checks in the forest), GPS Locater (+5 to navigate with a Survival check, can only be used outdoors)
Background: He was thirty before he ever saw Transylvania, but he wasn't surprised to see that it looked exactly the way it always had in his dreams. Born in the Carpathians to a mother he does not remember, Marius Vladu was sent into a Bucharest orphanage while he was still an infant. Life there was a lot like Hell, but less well-organized. There was never enough food, never enough staff to adequately watch the children. Big kids took food from smaller ones and paid them in beatings. You could see infants lying in pools of their own waste because no one had bothered to change their diapers for days.

A lot of children died in this system. Marius became one of the ones who killed instead. By the age of four he had figured out how to hurt children much bigger than himself so badly that they wouldn't take his food.

Death's Sting helped him a lot. Since infancy, he had dreams of the mountains where he had been born, dreams of a huge, ominous fortress and a voice that whispered to him from its depths. Death's Sting became his imaginary friend in his waking hours, too, and taught him a lot about where and how to hit people to make them fall down and break.

It wasn't long before the authorities noticed how much tougher and more savage he was than his fellow children, and he was taken away from the orphanage and raised in a far better facility, to one day join the ranks of Securitate. A picture of his new father, Nicolae Ceaucescu, hung in ever room. Every day from morning until night he praised his new father's name. But in his heart he already had a better one.

As he grew into adolescence he expected to outgrow the dreams. Instead they grew stronger, and he was forced to concede that his imaginary friend had been real all along. He saw hints that some of the other trainees who had been born in Transylvania were experiencing something similar.

As a young man, he pursued his job as a secret policeman with zeal, and rose swiftly through the ranks. He killed quite a few dissidents, both actual and suspected, over the course of his career, and every time he shot one, beat them to death in an interrogation room or strapped them down to receive a lethal dose of radiation therapy, he mentally sacrificed them to Death's Sting. By the time of the 1989 revolution he was working in counter-intelligence, at the embassy in London, so not only didn't he get killed in the street-violence, but he was allowed to go on working for the newly reformed state's spy agency—the SRI. Transferred to Division E in 2001, he maintained his contacts among the Diaspora of former Securitate goons, and he began to introduce more and more of his former comrades to the worship of Death's Sting and to preparing for his glorious return.

Earlier this year, he began to feel that the moment was almost right. Then the Dragomir brothers approached him, claiming to have had a vision that he could help them take over Transylvania and prepare for the great lord's return. He enthusiastically agreed, and brought his whole network of ex-Securitate contacts with him, as well as a good part of the

military intelligence unit he commanded. He was stationed with the Army garrison outside of Cluj and it was his job to ferret out disloyalty among military officers in Transylvania, which put him in an excellent position to conceal the growing coup from the authorities in Bucharest.

In person he is grim, guarded, and speaks only when he has to. He's a big, imposing man who keeps his hair shaved down to gray stubble. He has a taste for physical violence, but doesn't go out of his way to get into fights. Nor does he slap underlings around like Colonel Tarcu. He is nonetheless quite casual about taking life, would sooner kill a man than not. He knows that allies are replaceable, and feels that it's better to have five innocent men killed on suspicion than it is to let one genuine traitor live.

Colonel Bogdan Iorga
PL: 7

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 17 (+3) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus**: 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 4 (+2 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 7 **Reflexes Save:** 5 **Willpower Save:** 7

Skills: Climb 2 (+3), Diplomacy 3 (+4), Knowledge (Tactics) 9 (+12), Medicine 2 (+5), Notice 9 (+12), Profession (Military Officer) 9 (+12), Sense Motive 5 (+8), Stealth 3 (+4), Survival 4 (+7)
Feats: Assessment, Benefit (Leader of the Coup), Connected, Equipment 2 (10 pts. of equipment), Inspire, Leadership, Master Plan
Equipment: Binoculars (Telescopic Vision), Body Armor (4 Toughness), GPS Locater (+5 to navigate with a Survival check, can only be used outdoors), Machine Pistol (Ranged Weapon, 4 damage[Extra: Autofire])
Background: After the 1989 revolution, a lot of new opportunities opened up in the Romanian Officer Corps. They were desperate for talented young men with no ties to the former regime and there simply weren't enough of them to go round. A lot of promising young officers had a chance to make it to the upper ranks on talent alone, without any connections at all. One of them was Bogdan Iorga. A backwoods hick from the Semenic mountains, he joined the Army in 1992 because it seemed slightly safer than spending his life working down in the mines. Despite his halting, inarticulate manner of speech and his yokel accent, his natural aptitude for tank warfare was hard to conceal. He had such a keen instinctive grasp of tactics and in particular of how to use the ground to a tank unit's advantage that he was quickly pulled from the ranks and sent to officer school. He rose rapidly in the tank corps on merit alone.

Unable to make very many friends or cultivate the right kind of contacts, he became the youngest Colonel in the Romanian Army by the year 2000, and there his career has stagnated. He always seemed content to be a field officer. While he didn't have very developed people skills, he won every set of war-games his men participated in and they loved him for it, as well as for being a poor-man's son like most of them. A humane and reasonable commander, he managed to inspire his men to tremendous personal loyalty without being any good at making speeches.

When the coup erupted in Transylvania, the government's response was confused and disorganized. His unit was the first and only one sent in to stop it. He rolled into Timisoara with his tanks and confronted the Dragomir brothers. Then he revealed that he too has been a worshipper of Death's Sting since childhood, and has spent his whole life hearing the monster call to him in his dreams. He threw in his lot with the mutineers and the central government in Bucharest hastily decided to hold off on sending any more units in to reclaim Transylvania until they are more certain of their loyalty. They do not under any circumstances want to repeat the embarrassment that Colonel Iorga has caused them.

Stiff and sometimes inarticulate, Bogdan speaks slowly and carefully in military jargon and never speaks informally (he's afraid of saying something stupid). He isn't especially cruel or vindictive and

takes no pleasure from seeing anyone die. He won't let his men go berserk on civilians, torture prisoners or otherwise behave dishonorably—although they're already too well-disciplined for that to be much of a risk. He believes it is his destiny to help return Death's Sting to the world and if he absolutely has to kill someone to help bring this about, he will do it, but he'll try to do it as quickly and cleanly as possible.

Tall, skinny and awkward-looking, his boyish face makes him look even younger than he is. His teeth are an orthodontic mess, crooked and awful.

If the coup collapses he'll decide that he did his best for Death's Sting and try to find political asylum in some other country. This is not for himself—he wants to find a place from which he can launch some sort of legal defense for his men.

Colonel Lucian Tarcu

PL: 7

Str: 24 (+7)/12 (+1) [Without Power Armor] **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus**: 7 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 7 (+1 without armor)
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 7
Willpower Save: 7

Skills: Bluff 5 (+9), Diplomacy 8 (+12), Drive 2 (+3), Gather Information 5 (+9), Intimidate 8 (+12), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 3 (+4), Knowledge (Tactics) 3 (+4), Notice 4 (+4), Perform (Oratory) +12, Profession (Military Officer) 4 (+5), Sense Motive 7 (+8), Stealth 4 (+5)
Feats: Attractive, All-Out Attack, Chokehold, Distract, Fascinate, Inspire, Leadership, Power Attack, Rage 2, Skill Mastery (Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Perform), Taunt
Powers: Device 8 (Battlesuit: Communication 7 [Radio], Impervious Protection 6, Enhanced Strength 12, Super-Strength 4 [Maximum Lift: 6 Tons])
Equipment: Headquarters 7 (Castle; Size: Huge; Toughness: 10; Features: Isolated, Garage, Workshop)
Complications: Crazed devotee of Death's Sting. Kills his own men over nothing.
Background: A deluded megalomaniac with dreams of grandeur, he imagines himself to be a master villain, but doesn't have the power to back it up. Raised as a pampered child of a politically prominent family he was sent to school in Paris (where he did not excel at anything but drinking and getting into trouble) and groomed for a leadership position in the Romanian Air Force. There was a terrible scandal in his second year of High School. Through sheer force of personality, he managed to assemble a cult of teenaged Satanists, who sacrificed a dog and drank its blood. His parents swiftly transferred him to a military academy in East Germany.

Lucian eventually managed to secure a post as the commander of an elite paratrooper regiment, thanks largely to his parent' influence, and has held that position ever since. Always unstable, self-absorbed and prone to violent outbursts, he has dwelt partly in an elaborate fantasy world since childhood. When the Ceaucescu regime fell and his family was cast out of their position of privilege, Lucian went a little crazy and started to hear Death's Sting calling to him in his mind.

He has always been popular with his men, not because he's a skilled tactician (he isn't) but because of his tremendous charisma and inspiring oratory.

Romania's grand old noble families were largely swept away by the Communists. Only a few of the wealthiest managed to escape overseas when the Iron Curtain

closed down over the country. One effect of this is that anyone is free to imagine a grand aristocratic past for himself, whether or not it has any basis in reality. After the collapse of his real family's position in society, he invented a whole aristocratic lineage, and even figured out where in Transylvania his ancestral castle must lie. Ironically enough, he was correct. His ancestors had indeed been among the servitors of Death's Sting in the distant past, though everyone had long since forgotten it. The 15th century castle that he decided must belong to him was in fact built on the site of the fortress that his family had once owned. Clearly, the influence of Death's Sting had a lot to do with his delusions.

He was busily converting as many of his most loyal men as possible to the worship of his secret master, when the Drgaomir twins and Radu Cozma approached him and asked for his aid. It has been an uneasy alliance. He needs the other members of the coup, needs the manpower and the management skills they bring, but he also wants to be the one true lieutenant of Death's Sting. None of the others trust him, and he doesn't trust them, either.

During the coup, he seized control of the empty castle which he believes to be his rightful family home, and he seldom comes down from it anymore. The castle is in poor shape, falling apart in places. In fact the castle itself offers so little protection from the elements that his men are bivouacked in tents inside its walls.

While raiding the armory at Cluj, Tarcu found an amazing relic from the Ceaucescu era—a functioning Soviet power-armor suit, long since forgotten by the Romanian authorities. He spends a lot of his time wearing it, although he isn't any good at controlling it. The suit has no weapons systems, but it does enhance his strength and looks really impressive. There is no helmet, but he wants people to see his face when he wears it, anyway. Whenever he isn't strutting around in his armor, he wears specially designed uniforms with scrub-brush epulattes and a lot of gold braid. He never goes anywhere without a cadre of personal bodyguards selected from among his "Blood-Drinkers," trusted paratroopers whom he has personally converted to worshipping Death's Sting.

A loud, pompous antagonist, forever blathering on about his own greatness, you could really mistake him for the arch-villain he claims to be. Something of an idiot, something of a clown, he still has tremendous personal magnetism. A dark, handsome man, with high cheekbones and graying hair that is a little too long for military commander, he has penetrating, crazy eyes. His voice is sonorous, deep and commanding. It's hard to take him seriously, but it's not hard to see why impressionable young men follow him. Only at second glance do most people realize that he's actually a little guy—no taller than about 5'6".

Colonel Tarcu is prone to throwing violent fits over petty little things and is constantly striking, or even killing, his subordinates over trivial mistakes. This tendency has grown worse as he has grown more isolated and crazy. For now his men are still fanatically loyal, but it's only a matter of time before he loses their respect and gets shot in the back—if his allies or the PCs don't get him first.

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